

Of Bows and Dragons

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Summary: With Berk Dying and becoming uninhabitable, Hiccup is sent to find a new land. Soon, he winds up on a strange island that the locals call Scotland. Then he finds a beautiful red head injured in the forest. The peoples of Berk and DunBroch face many trials and obstacles as they try to survive and avoid the threats that encroach on them from all sides.

1. Chapter 1

****ANI** am having the story under go major major edits after having seen the second movie. The premise is the same but Hiccups motivation changed. SO here we go. This is still going to be Mericcup. This is three years after Brave and she was 15 during her movie. Hiccup was 14 and its been 4 years since the first movie and only a few months since the second. For Hiccups Armor think of HTTYD2. Astrid and Hiccup failed at dating and are only friends and were so at the start of the second movie. TV show is disregarded. Now on with the show.**

Of Bows and Dragons

Chapter 1 Beginnings

A lone armored man sped along on a large black beast. The rider leaned forward and gripped the handles on the saddles tighter. The dragon grinned as they performed various aerial stunts. While usually it would only be the rider excited by this. This Night Fury however had an artificial tailfin that could only be operated by a rider. This dragon and rider were named Toothless and Hiccup Horrendous Haddock III, respectively. Their home, Berk, would be described by its inhabitants as twelve days north of Hopeless and a few degrees south of Freezing to Death.

This young rider could not take time for fun. Not while the Vikings of Berk, his people were counting on them.

Flashback

_Hiccup wiped the soot and sweat he acquired while working in the forge. He kept his job as a smith because he enjoyed the creativity it provided despite his duty as chief. He only had a brief time don his blackened armor before the meeting at the village mead hall. He shut and locked the old smithy and looked to where the setting sun should have been. _

'_Damn.' He thought. Running late to your own meeting was just bad form. He ran as fast as he could across the rocky and hilly ground with a metal leg. Opening the doors, Hiccup was greeted by the sight of most of the village adults. _

"_Hiccup! Glad you finally showed up!" shouted Gobbler, "They were gettin a bit antsy."_

Hiccup just shrugged and stood next to his large friend and mentor at the far end of the large round table. He held up his hand to call for silence. "So, uh, I called you all here to talk about our current, um ah, living situation." Hiccup paused and watched as his kin shared sad and uncomfortable looks. "As you are all aware the attack by Drago left us devastated. We all lost som-somone" He trailed off.

His Mother reached out and put a hand on the young man's shoulder. "Someone during the attack. But other than the human cost, our home has been decimated. Our forests and few crops have been turned to ash and we have no way to regrow them. And the ancient dragon Drago had scared away or ate most of the fish. I believe this may be the end of our time on Berk."

The outrage was instant villagers were yelling weapons went flying.

"_Alright!" shouted Gobber, "Alright. Now, hold on now. The lad has a point. This isn't like the war we had with the other tribes a couple of years back." _

"_But Gobber this is our Home! Our ancestors, they lived and died here." Cried the voice of a villager in the back of the room._

"_And if we stay here every one of us will die here. Our Children are starving, the trader is still at least three months away, and winter is still fast approaching." Hiccup paused as mummers of agreement spread through the group. "I'm proposing a rider go and search for a new home."_

Flashback end

That was three weeks ago. They spent the first two weeks settlement hopping among the Vikings. At all of the mead halls he visited he just wanted to be accepted by his kinsmen and find a place to call home. Unfortunately, he was chased out of every single one. Evidently they felt as most other tribes: Vikings should not make peace with the dragons. Not to mention the rumors of the Black Rider and his acts in the tribal wars.

Hiccup and Toothless spent the last week of their exile living in the

local forests of whatever land they had arrived in. "This is great," said Hiccup with sarcasm dripping from his voice, "we can just live out here forever, eh, buddy?" Toothless slapped him with the flaps on the side of his head. "Yeah, yeah. Not enough fish and meat."

They glided over the beautiful lush forests with a crystal blue river running through it. As the sun went down Hiccup directed his dragon towards a clearing in the forest. As they landed the young Viking unhooked himself from the saddle and slide off. After regaining his land legs he approached his only friend and removed the saddle and hung it in a nearby tree. These lands would be perfect if they could find someone to ally themselves with.

They then set to work on their new nightly routine. Toothless prepared a fire to cook his human's food, while Hiccup removed the food stuff from the saddlebags. After dinner the two of them curled up to sleep.

The Next Morning€|.

Castle DunBroch was already bustling with activity at eight in the morning. Shop owners bustled to open their shops and tradesmen work at their trades. A single maid was to awaken the princess. Such was life in northern Scotland.

"Princess Merida! Mornin' is 'ere!" called the maid as she tore open the curtains.

The lump in the bed moaned and twisted. "I don't want too."

"Breakfast is almost severed, lass." The maid said casually as she picked up a green dress.

The promise of food made the princess leap out of bed. She quickly grabbed the dress, put it on, and grabbed her bow and quiver. Merida rushed down the hall and made it to the main hall just as the servants brought large bowls of bacon, sausage, and eggs. "I made it!"

After a healthy dose of breakfast she went to bolt.

"Be back by lunch!" her mother called after her.

With Merida

Merida decided not to ride Angus during this crisp morn. Suddenly the blue of a Wil-o-wisp appeared in front of her as she was walking deeper into the forest.

She sprinted after the tail for another minute until her foot caught on a root and she tumbled into small stream, which wouldn't have been a problem had she not hit her head on a rock. She was about to drown. Coincidentally, and thankfully, she wasn't alone in the forest.

_With Hiccup _

Hiccup and Toothless woke up and started to make their breakfast once the sun started filtering in through the trees. Suddenly, Toothless stood up on his hind legs with his ears perked up. He growled and

bolted in the direction of the stream they had seen the night before. Without thinking the still armored Hiccup grabbed his helmet and rushed after his best friend. The pair quickly came to the stream. "Toothless!" Hiccup shouted as he rushed towards the mass of red hair connected to the vibrant green dress.

He turned her over and put his ear to her chest. Nothing. He began to do compressions on the young girls chest. A moment later she coughed up a bunch of water. He checked again. _Ba-bum, ba-bum. _"She'll make it, buddy." He looked her over, "But it looks like she hit her head pretty bad. Let's get her back to camp." '_Damn she's pretty.'_

At the camp Hiccup laid the ginger down with her head leaning on a rock. In a short time he had her small cut cleaned and bandaged. Once he was satisfied with his work and he was sure there were no other injuries, Hiccup sat on a boulder near the fire and his dragon.

Toothless was curious about this new human Hiccup found. Her aura was pleasant to feel. It was similar to that of his human. Or at least his human before the war, now it was a bit darker. He stood up on his hind legs and waddled over to the sleeping girl.

"Toothless?" called Hiccup as he saw the approach. The Night Fury sniffed her again and laid down beside her. "Oh sure. It takes me weeks to even get close to you. It takes her ten minutes."

Toothless' ears perked up and he gave his signature grin to his friend. The dragon's thoughts returned to the unconscious fire headed human beside him. Her aura was kind and it smelled of forests. He nestled in close to the flame head girl for a nap.

Hiccup smiled at the two being to his left. He took out his journal from his bag and he grabbed a piece of charcoal out of the pit. Hiccup began a pass time he hadn't had time or the inclination to do since he had become chief. He began to draw more than just a map.

****AN: That is the end of CH1. Review should you like. Let me know what you think of the edits.****

2. Chapter 2

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****I own nothing.****

****Of Bows and Dragons****

****Chapter 2: ****

It was lunch time when Hiccup put down his charcoal pencil and stood up to stretch. His prosthetic leg creaked and clicked. It needed to be repaired. He didn't have the tools for the up keep on it here. Hiccup looked over at Toothless and the red haired lady. The young man studied her for the third or fourth time that morning. The dress she wore was vibrant and spoke of richness. '_She is too far out of my league,' _ thought Hiccup. '_It's not surprising the more I think about it. Chief or notâ€|'_

His head snapped up when he heard movement off to the left. Toothless had stood up. The black dragon licked his lips and nodded towards the stream '_food'_ was his thought.

Hiccup understood immediately, especially when he felt his own stomach rumble. "If you're getting fish, get some extra in case she wakes up."

Toothless rolled his eyes, as if to say duh, grabbed an empty bag and sprinted towards the water. Hiccup smile and shook his head. Sitting down, he replaced his glove and went to go pick up his journal when he heard a moan. The fiery headed girl was beginning to wake up! "Hey, are you ok?" he asked as he approached her, careful to keep his distance though, "Uh, Lady?" He dared to inch a little closer.

The young woman opened her eyes suddenly and sat up. And then instantly regretted it. "Ow, my head," she said with an odd accent. She reached up to feel her head. It was bandaged. '_What happened? Where am I?' _she thought nor noticing the armored young man to her side.

"Uhâ€|.Lady? A-are you ok?" Hiccup kneeled down to her level.

"My name isn't Lady!" she said in an angry tone. She turn to face him, but faltered for a second. __'Handsome'__ she thought. She started again in a kinder, yet still miffed, voice, "My name is Merida," she touched her head again, "What happened?"

Hiccup walked over and picked up a water skin and handed it to her, "We found you in a stream about a half mile that way," he nodded in the direction that his dragon had gone, "You were knocked out, I think you might have hit your head on a rock. What do you remember?"

Merida had tensed at the word 'we' and hoisted herself onto the rock she had been leaning on, "I was just exploring the forest. Then I tripped." Merida looked around the clearing. "So who is we?"

Hiccup rubbed the back of his head, "We I-I didn't say we. No we here. Just me."

"No you said we. Where is the other?"

"Look there is not another person here with us," Started Hiccup but was interrupted by a sack hitting the forest floor. Causing both humans to turn.

With Toothless just beforeâ€|

Toothless happily carried the fish in his front legs while walking on

his hind legs. He trekked through the woods until he came to the clearing they were camped in. Hearing voices the young black dragon clung to the shadows. His human was stuttering. It was funny to see his friend back pedal and say that there was no one else there.

Toothless huffed in annoyance at the 'not another person here comment'. He was people. So he made his presence known.

Merida was frozen at the sight of the large black beast. Hiccup was frozen because Merida saw Toothless.

"Merida. Don't panic." He came up to the young woman's side.

"Merida leaned her head toward him, "Don't panic?" she whispered frantically, "It's a damn, bloody dragon and you say don't panic!" She looked down at her bow and began eyeing it, hoping she could reach it and fire before the beast attacked.

"Listen, he won't attack you. Just stay calm." The Viking looked back at the dragon.

The two humans began moving forward at the same time. Due to Merida's concussion and Hiccup's awkward gait they collided and tumbled into a mass of limbs. Toothless let out a series of sounds that sounded like laughter.

The two's faces only a few inches apart. They stayed like that a few moments until they both started to go red. Merida, having landed on top, stood up and looked at the dragon having a fit of laughter. "He really is harmless isn't he?"

Hiccup sat on the rock previously occupied by the ginger girl, "N-no. He's dangerous. But, he's my friend."

"You could have said tha' to start with," Merida turned to face him, "I didn't even know they were real."

Toothless came over and sat by his human, "As far as I can tell my village is one a couple of handful of ones that have had problems with them," he started to scratch his dragon's head, "The two of us ended that."

Merida smiled at the two. They looked like good friends. She made a mental note to ask him about the story later. In the meantime, "So, what are your names then? I could just call you boy and dragon."

Hiccup went red with embarrassment again. "I-I-I'm Hiccup, and this is Toothless." He said gesturing to Toothless.

Merida started trying to stifle laughter, "Tha's a funny name, lad." Apparently it was possible for him to blush deeper. After a couple more moments the Scot stopped laughing.

Hiccup huffed and picked up the sack of fish. He took out two decent sized fish and laid them to the side. Then he tossed the sack to Toothless, "Eat up buddy." Merida watched as the boy grabbed a couple of sharp sticks from his pile of equipment. Then he speared one on each of the two fish and handed a stick to her. She watched as Hiccup

walked over towards the fire and held it over. Noticing, with curiosity, the pops and clicks from the prosthetic leg she hadn't notice before. She stuck her own fish over the fire.

"So, Hiccup," Merida began, "What happened to your leg?" she tried to sound as causal and calm as possible. She wasn't exactly calm. The princess was wary of the dragon, who wouldn't be, but she was more wary of the unknown man in front of her. She needed to know more.

Hiccup smiled and looked at his leg. A tiny piece of metal was sticking out. "The spring in the foot broke. Now it makes noise," said Hiccup with a smile.

"No. I meant your first leg."

"Ah. Now that is a story." Hiccup poked the fire with a stick. "Long story short I did somethingâ€¦. stupidâ€¦ Andâ€¦.. Crazy."

Merida rolled her eyes, "How did it get hurt?"

Hiccup smiled. "That isâ€¦ a story for a later time."

Having finished his own fish, Toothless and curled up next to his friend. An hour or so later both humans finished their meals as well. Merida looked to the sun it was a couple of hours past noon. "I need to get home. My parents will kill me!" She stood up fast and suddenly got light headed. Still feeling the effects of her head injury.

Hiccup caught her shoulders to steady her, "You're in no condition to be going anywhere alone." He let her go and he quickly tied his bag shut and slung it over his shoulder. "Come on. Point us to your home."

****AN: That is the end of CH2. Review if you'd like, please give me some honest feedback if you do.****

3. Chapter 3

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****Chapter 3****

Hiccup approached Toothless and kneeled to his faithful dragon, "Toothless, they will lose their heads if they see you," he turned and looked at the waiting woman and then back to him, "I'll be back in a few days. If I get the feeling this could be a home and I can

strike a deal with the Chief I'll come back and get you. If not, well you know the rest." He stood up and placed his helmet on his head. "Stay safe. Come get me if there is trouble."

As Hiccup approached Merida she looked confused. "Why aren't we taking your dragon?"

Hiccup leaned down to pick up her bow and quiver to hand to her. He smirked beneath his helmet, "He'd cause panic. An armored stranger with a mythical beast? No way."

Merida huffed and rolled her eyes. She accepted the bow and slung the quiver onto her back. She started walking in the direction of the stream. Leaving Hiccup to look at Toothless who only offered him a shrug of confusion. The young Viking shook his head and quickly caught up to the fiery young woman. "So," he started, "Where are we going?"

Merida smiled softly, "DunBroch. My home." After a few moments of silence she asked, "Where are you from?"

Hiccup didn't answer for a few minutes. '_DunBroch? Where have I heard that name before?' _thought Hiccup. Then it hit him. He had left Viking Territory and entered into the lands of the Scots. '_I need to take her home and then leave. Quickly.' _Meanwhile, Merida studied her temporary protector. His armor was made out of thick leather with metal reinforcing it based on the clanking. It consisted of a breast plate, shoulder pads (one with a red crest), strange leg armor, and full arm guards. Several daggers were strapped to his body. His belongings were in a medium sized pack that was tightly packed and firmly bound to his body. He carried himself tall and full of confidence, but his speech was timid. He was a contradiction. "I'm from a village in the North."

Merida raised an eyebrow. "That's it? Just North." It was too vague. It didn't help the little trust she had.

Hiccup turned his head to look at her. "It was twelve days north of Hopeless and a few degrees south from Freezing to Death."

The young Scottish girl giggled, "Sounds charming, laddie. What made you want to leave such a wonderful place?"

Unconsciously Hiccup tensed his shoulders. "I-I-I, uh, needed to leave. Our village is dying and I was sent to scout ahead to a new home." Merida just nodded. It was incredibly suspicious though. The two walked in verbal science. The only non-woodland sound was Hiccup's leg as it clicked and squeaked.

The two didn't do much talking for a while. They just stole glances at each other. As they neared the tree line Merida stopped and held an arm out to catch Hiccup across his chest. Making silencing motions she drew her bow and knocked an arrow. Hiccup followed her lead and had a dagger in one hand and a hilt in the other. Merida swung around and saw what she had heard. A large bear.

Ever since Mor'du was killed, bears had been more common. The bear roared and charged the pair. Merida saw double and her arrow missed. Hiccup pushed her out of the way just in time to catch the swipe of the bear's claws across his left lower side, where there was no

armor. The cuts burned and Hiccup yelled.

Hiccup active his fire sword and swung his right hand back towards the beast. He was pushed away by the bear before the blade could make meaningful contact but singed the fur greatly. The young Viking turned just in time to see two arrows sprout from the bears shoulder and chest. Merida had fired at both bears this time.

Suddenly there was a loud, high pitched whistling sound. A blue fire ball slammed into the bear, mortally wounding it. While the furry beast was trying keep standing, Toothless tackled the bear. Using a second blast of blue fire he ended the bear's misery. The dragon helped Hiccup up and acted as a crutch for his friend. He didn't want worsen his wounds and he needed to stay awake incase the blood loss was worse or more internal than it looked.

Hiccup and Toothless looked at the fallen beast. Suddenly, loud voices with the same accent as Merida were approaching the trio. It was a group of about eight men wearing what looked to Hiccup like green skirts. They looked relieved at the sight of the ginger girl but quickly became frightened when they saw the other two. Hiccup seemed to be right about their reaction unfortunately.

The set of warriors raised their weapons and got ready to charge. Toothless began to growl and his ridges trembled.

"STOP!" shouted Merida. The whole company looked at her, the warriors dropped their weapons, and Toothless sat back on his hind legs. "They gave me aid. You'll not be harming them. Either of them." She looked at the helmeted figure and his dragon. "Are either of you hurt?"

Toothless shook his large head. He was fine, the bear wasn't it was dead, He was fine. Hiccup however just held up his right hand, which had been pressed against his left side. Blood dripped off of his hand, "Tis but a scratch."

Merida looked at him with an unamused face. "You could have been killed. Let's get you to a healer," she turned to her fellow Scots, "Take care of them. I'm going to see my dad."

One of the warriors bowed and the other's followed suite, "Yes, Princess." They intoned.

Hiccup's mind was reeling. _Prin-pri-princess?! No wnder they were so protective of her. That's the first princess I've ever met. I assumed they would be stuck up and not want to even touch a weapon. Guess that explains why she's so pretty. Where did that come from? Looks like I'm in it deep. _Hiccup shook his head to clear it. He was losing his mind. He gripped his side tightly, attempting to dull the pain.

The warrior who Hiccup assumed was in charge came up to him, keeping his distance from the Night Fury, said, "You'll be coming with us then." Hiccup adjusted the bag on his back, nodded and followed the men. His leg made even louder clicks. He leaned heavier on toothless. The man in front of them spoke up, "So what is your name, then lad?"

"Um, Hiccup, uh, sir."

The company laughed. "Lad. Did your parents hate you?" asked a man to his left.

Hiccup just shrugged, "It's common where I'm from to have an odd name. They say it's supposed to scare off gnomes and trolls. Besides it's not the worst name I've heard." He was breathing heavy

The rest of their walk to the castle gates was in silence. The men kept their distance from the Viking and dragon. They didn't trust them and Hiccup didn't blame them. He just wished they would loosen their grips on their swords. The gates drew nearer and nearer and Hiccup closed his eyes silently pleading for the townspeople to be calmer than his escorts.

Of course it didn't quite happen that way. As soon as they passed through the gates people began to line the streets and parents sent their children inside. Many of them held weapons. Hiccup didn't blame them all but that's not what caught his attention though. The huge stone structure was incredible. Hiccup and Toothless shared wide eyed looks as neither of them had ever seen such a thing. The escorts led him to a stone building that wasn't near as large as the other.

The man in charge knocked on the door and an grizzled old man came to the door. He asked, "What is it this time, Angus? Another hunting accident?"

The lead man, Angus, smiled. "In a way, I guess, Connor. We found these two," he jerked his thumb towards Hiccup and Toothless, "in the forest. They killed the bear we were tracking. The boy went and got himself mauled."

Hiccup was led into the building by the healer, gipping his side tightly, and Toothless followed closely. Hiccup was directed towards a small chair and his dragon crammed himself behind the chair. Connor rolled his eyes. "As long as yourâ€¦ thing keeps his distance he can stay. Now let's remove your shirt and armor."

Hiccup complied and painfully unbuckled the breast plate and belongings. He tried to peel the shirt off of his torso but the shooting pain in his side made him stop. He was starting to feel woozy. The healer drew a short knife and cut his shirt off of him, leaving him half naked.

The doctor turned and picked up a white cloth. He handed it to Hiccup to press onto the wound. "So," the healer named Connor started, "Why in the hell did a young man like you think could take on a full grown bear?"

Before Hiccup could answer the now bloody cloth was pulled away and a stinging liquid was poured over his long cuts. Hiccup shook his head and fought the pain, "It, ah, attacked us."

The healer began to inspect the wounds on his patient. "Most men would have run."

"I don't exactly," Hiccup gave a sharp intake of breath as he was prodded, "run very fast anymore," he said gesturing to his leg.

Connor shrugged, "I still think it was something else. Now then. To business." He prodded and poked some more. "Their deep and bleeding a lot, but they didn't reach your innards. So, that's lucky." He pulled out some needle and thread.

"Tis' but a scratch."

"A scratch? You're leaking like a rotten bucket." Connor began to sew the strips of flesh back together.

"I've had worse!" Hiccup protested.

"I can tell. Your bloody leg is off!" Connor chuckled as he continued stitching him up. In addition to the false leg he was covered in scars of various sizes. He was starting from the highest cut and working his way down. He was a little unnerved by the black dragon watching his every move with fascination. It wasn't bad though. He was almost calming and acted like a protective dog or cat. The old man didn't have any trouble treating the young man. He didn't flinch away from pain and he sat straight up. After he sealed the lowest and longest cut he used a wet cloth to wipe away the crimson liquid. He bound Hiccups lower torso with a long strip of white cloth. "Alright you're done. So you don't pop a stitch, don't try to put a shirt on for a few days."

Hiccup tested his movement. It was decent. "Then what am I supposed to where?" His answer was in the form of a green skirt thing he had seen every other male, including Connor, wearing. "A skirt? You want me to wear a skirt?"

Connor smacked the back of his head, "It's a kilt lad! It's a proud garment."

Hiccup shrugged and undid the rope holding his pant leg to his replacement foot. He expertly undid the harness and removed the foot to reveal the stump that ended at mid shin. Light burn scars made a ring around the end. After removing his pants and leg armor, Hiccup donned the 'kilt' with guidance from the healer. Hiccup removed the remainder of his armor and stowed it in a second bag. He then lashed both bags and his leg to Toothless' saddle.

He balanced himself and looked into the mirror on the wall. He was still skinny but he had built up some muscle over the years. He looked almost natural wearing an emerald green kilt with a length of cloth make making a loose sash across his body from left hip to right shoulder and a leather and fur boot. Several scars were visible on his torso. He began to stare at his stump. Toothless came over and sat next to him and held his tail so it was visible in the mirror. Hiccup leaned onto his best friend's shoulder, "Just a couple of cripples right buddy?"

Connor came over and patted his shoulder. "I have a feeling that whatever made you a 'cripple' is the same reason why you faced the bear. It's why you are a better man."

"Being stupid and crazy doesn't make me a better man." Toothless licked his face as if to say, _It's ok._

"Your beast," Toothless growled at the healer, "Friend," the dragon nodded, "Is right. You are you. The best you there is. Now you best

be off. I expect the King would like a word with you."

Hiccup nodded. Satisfied with his appearance he and Toothless started towards the door. As they neared it opened on its own accord.

A few moments beforeâ€|

Merida made her way back through the streets of DunBroch towards the healer's house. Her Parents were angry when she first appeared because she was several hours late. The anger quickly turned to concern when they saw the bandage on her head. Then they demanded to know what happened. And she told them. She explained how she was found in the river and cared for by Hiccup, that she met his friend Toothless and that they saved her from a bear and Hiccup had been injured in that conflict. They wanted to meet these men as soon as possible.

That was the other thing on her mind. She had neglected to mention they weren't both men.

Whoops. Thankfully because of them waiting to meet the pair all visitations were being held.

Merida stood on the other side of the healer's door wearing a clean dress. She opened it to see her new friends. She evaluated Hiccup quickly. He was wearing DunBroch kilt. Around his abdomen was a white cotton bandage. His remaining visible chest and his arms were well defined but quite scarred. His false leg was removed leaving him with one boot.

"'ello Hiccup!" Merida waved happily. "It's nice to see you properly dressed now. My parents would like to meet you."

'Y-yy-you mean th-the King and Queen?"

"Yep."

AN: Review if you will. Let me know what you think, good or bad.

4. Chapter 4

AN: Well this is the end of the edited chapters. Next is a brand new one!

OF BOWS AND DRAGONS

Chapter 4

Hiccup paled and shifted nervously, "I-I-I don't th-think that it's a good i-i-idea." He did NOT want to meet monarchs of a potentially hostile group for no reason. He could barely handle their daughter. '_Not because she's a princess thoughâ€|wait, what?','_ He thought.

Merida rolled her eyes and grabbed his shoulder pulling him along, "Come on." She had forgotten about his leg being removed and he only managed one hop before he planted his face into the ground. She covered her mouth, her face went crimson, and her eyes went wide.

"Hiccup! I'm so sorry lad!"

She made to help him up but Toothless beat her to it. He glared at the young woman. No matter how much she felt like his human, she wasn't him. She had no right to treat him like that.

Hiccup wrapped his arms around the dragons head. He was hoisted to his foot. "Toothless don't give her that look. It was an accident," said Hiccup looked at the princess with some hurt hidden in his features. The Night Fury gave an annoyed huff and broke eye contact with Merida.

The flaming haired girl almost reached out to grab his shoulders again but she stopped herself, "I AM sorry."

Hiccup leaned to his right and rested on his friend. "It's fine. Don't worry about it. Happens all the time."

Merida fidgeted nervously but then regained her composure, "Well then we should probably be gettin' on up to the castle." She swept her arm in its general direction. "Bad news to keep them waiting."

Hiccup sighed, "It will take a while for me to make up there with my leg damaged as it is."

"That's okay. I'll support you!" she looked at the dragon who was doing his best not to look friendly, "or you can ride your dragon."

The young Viking looked at his companion with an inquisitive look. Toothless looked back. Hiccup nodded towards the saddle and the dragon nodded back. He flashed his eyes to Merida and nodded toward the saddle again. Toothless shook his head. Hiccup just stared at him with a raised eyebrow. The dragon gave first. He lowered himself so they could get on.

"Alright, climb on." Said Hiccup as he somehow managed to hoist himself onto the black beast. He held out his hand which Merida grabbed hesitantly, while blushing profusely. He pulled her up with relative ease. She was about to her hands around his middle, but remembered he wounds so she opted to hold his bags. Hiccup realized they were ready to run. He leaned down and whispered in Toothless' ear, "I'm a little tender right now. So be nice."

Toothless just rolled his eyes and huffed. But he complied any way. As they walked through the town, they drew the people's attention. Their reactions varied though. Some pointed and whispered at both the dragon and the princess that was riding in the same saddle as the stranger. Others, mainly the children, stared in awe of the large black beast. Many, however, were hostile and fearful. They gripped their weapons tightly or quickly hid inside their homes.

Hiccup sighed internally. _'If this is how they react to a dragon maybe we shouldn't even consider staying here. No matter how injured I might be.'_

Toothless was receptive to his human's discomfort and turned his head to look at him. He gave him a toothless grin which Hiccup returned in kind.

As they approached the large oaken doors, Merida slid out of the leather saddle as only a practiced horse rider could. She ran to the doors ahead of the other two. Facing them she said, "I'm just goin' to let them know that you're here. Just wait. Right there." With that, she slipped behind the door.

Hiccup rolled his eyes and slid out of the saddle on to the right side of Toothless. He landed expertly on his right foot. He placed a hand on his dragon's head, "Stay calm. Don't give them reason to be suspicious."

Toothless gave him a confused look. He was always a perfect little angel. It was the humans who started things. He was innocent.

Both males had their attention grabbed by a clearing of Merida's throat. They turned to see her. "Come on lads! They're waiting."

Hiccup and Toothless shared a look with one another. Both shrugged. Hiccup gripped the saddle hoisted himself so he could place his fleshy foot into the stirrup and they moved into the throne room.

Moments earlierâ€¦|..

King Fergus stopped talking to his wife about the tension between the clans as soon as Merida entered. Those bloody scoundrels wanted Merida wed soon, despite their previous agreement. He watched as his daughter approached him with a large smile on her face.

"They're outside. Please be nice."

"I'm always nice! Its other people that make me just **seem** not nice!" cried Fergus with mock indignation.

Elinor just rolled her eyes and patted her husband's hand, "Just let them in and meet them."

Merida smiled and ran off to open the doors. The two reigning monarchs shared a look. Then the heroes of the hour entered. What the king and queen saw astounded them. Before them was a dragon and an average lad sized lad hanging on the side off the saddle. The dragon was jet black and had piercing green intelligent eyes. The lad was overall unremarkable from this angle with the exception of the bandage around his waist. They walked until they had reached the stone step at the foot of the thrones.

The lad stepped off in a strange way and faced the family, steadying himself on his dragon who was sitting almost like a dog who is begging would. Fergus' mind was reeling. That was a black dragon. He had heard stories about a black dragon and his rider in black armor, whose actions in Viking wars had shook traders in fear. They called the rider a demon. They called him the Black Rider. But it couldn't be these two. The boy wasn't seven feet tall like the rumors said.

He quickly reevaluated the pair. The dragon seemed to not be the blood thirsty beast that ancient legends made his kind out to be. It seemed almost docile. The left side of its tail also seemed to be artificial and attached to an odd device on the left side of the

saddle. The boy was skinny but muscled and scared, he had seen some action. He stood about five foot, eight. His dark brown hair hung to his chin. As Fergus studied him he noticed that his left leg ended in swirling scars at just above mid shin.

At the same time Hiccup looked them over as well. The King was a mountain of a man. He had long red hair like his daughter's and a large mustache with chin stubble. He was wearing a large green kilt, much like hiccups, but had a shirt and chainmail underneath. His peg leg was of a piece of knotty his shoulders was a massive bear skin. If not for the Kilt he'd have passed for a Viking.

The Queen was smaller than her husband and didn't resemble Viking women at all. She wore a flowing green dress with a golden belt running around her waist. Her hair was tamed in a braid, unlike her daughters.

Merida faced her parents, "Mum, dad. This is Hiccup and Toothless. Hiccup and Toothless. King Fergus and Queen Elinor." She had pointed each person in turn. "The wee devils aren't here right now. You'll meet them later." Merida quickly sat next to her mother.

For several moments no one said anything else. The Queen broke the silence, "Thank you for saving our daughter."

Hiccup nervously bounced on his foot. In a fight he didn't know fear, but in a social situation he couldn't make even eye contact. "It's nothing."

The King and Queen looked at each other. "Nothing?" bellowed Fergus, "Lad, you saved our daughter, the princess, twice."

Hiccup looked up, "I-i-it wa-was what anyone would have d-done."

Fergus was about to speak but Elinor cut him off, "Many would have bandaged and given her aid, yes. But how many men would jump in front of a bear? How many would be attacked for a stranger?"

Hiccup smiled softly and looked down, "I have the habit of doing things others might consider stupid and crazy."

Fergus grinned at the lad, "Well, I'm glad you do. Now we want to reward you. Is there anything you want?"

Hiccup's mind raced. What did he want?_ 'His Father'_. He wanted things like they were before it all went to hell, two years ago. Or at least him safe. _'Berk to be safe'_. _He wanted to go home but he couldn't return without a new location. _'Home'_. _He wanted a place he could call home again. _' For Toothless to meet another Night Fury' 'Meri- Wait. What?' _"I want a lot of things. Very few of them you can give me. But I'd like a place to stay while I heal that Toothless can stay in as well and a forge to use to fix my leg."

Fergus's face broke into a wide grin, "Done. I'll have Merida take you to the Forge. It hasn't been used for a while. Our old smith died last winter. In the meantime I'll have servants make you up a room here, in the castle."

Hiccup's eyes went wide, "That sounds good."

Merida stood and walked over next to Hiccup. The Viking stood in the stirrup again. "Be back by sundown for dinner." The trio moved out of the room and towards the forge.

Elinor looked to her husband, "Is that a good idea? Allowing him to stay in the castle? The only livable room at the moment is right next to Merida's. It isn't proper."

Fergus leaned back in his chair, "Dear, the lad could hardly ****speak**** to us without being nervous. I don't think that will be a problem." '_But the only places with confirmed dragon sighting is Viking territory. If that boy is a Viking, I want someone I trust to be watching him. The last thing we need is another war like twenty years ago'._

Forge of Castle DunBroch

Hiccup was in awe of the forge he was brought to. It was more sophisticated the one he learned in on Berk. He grabbed a dusty apron from its hook. With a blast of fire from Toothless, he was underway. While the forge heated up he took the leg from his dragons back.

Merida watched in fascination as he expertly disassembled his wood and metal limb. He picked up the mutilated piece that was causing the problems. The princess realized it used to be a spring. Now it was a twisted clump. He tossed it on the ground. "Aren't you going to re-use that?"

Hiccup was work mode. He didn't even turn and face her, "I can't. I have to use soft metal for the spring. Over time it compacts and I can't stretch it back out. I have to start fresh."

With that he began to work on his art. Merida watched for an hour and a half as Hiccup shaped the metal. He heated and hammered it repeatedly. By the end it was obvious how the young man had built his muscle. The hammer finally became silent. And the forge began to cool.

Hiccup reassembled his leg. Pulling up a dusty stool he began to strap on his appendage. It only took him a few moments to tighten the three leather straps. Standing up he tested the spring. Perfect. He turned to his friend, "Are we ready to go?"

Merida looked at his completed left leg. It made him seem more complete. Merida nodded and they walked in silence back to the castle.

At the castle they were all directed to their rooms to freshen up before dinner.

5. Chapter 5

****AN:** This is the newest chapter. Not much else. Please direct all questions to my inbox. And here we go.******

****I own nothing.****

****OF BOWS AND DRAGONS****

****Chapter 4****

At the castle they were all directed to their rooms to freshen up before dinner. Hiccup and Toothless went into their room and Merida went into hers. Hiccup was stunned at the room. A large four poster bed with soft, inviting blankets sat next to a large fire place. In the far corner was a second mattress that was obviously meant for the dragon. He wanted to lie down and sleep peacefully, but his hunger told him wait. He walked over to the stone wash basin and mirror opposite of the bed.

Using the rag in the basin, he scrubbed the soot and grime off of his face and arms. Examining himself in the mirror he seemed satisfied. As he went to turn away, he saw stripes of red in the cotton bandages wrapped around waist. _'Maybe I should lay off the smithing for the time being.'_ There hadn't been pain while he had been working. But he didn't notice anything while he worked. And he had had worse. He walked over to Toothless and removed the bags from the saddle to lighten the strain. "We're in deep this time, bud. Who knows what they'll do if they figure out I'm a Viking. Maybe I should just tell the king. Let him know who I am. Maybe he'll let us leave alive." Hiccup's stomach gave a loud growl, "But we can worry about that after we eat."

Toothless licked his humans face. Whatever happened he would be by his side. The black dragon still believed that they could live here. Regardless of how the townspeople reacted to the two of them in town, the fire-head girl's family seemed to be rather nice. They were the Alphas so trust from them would filter down to the others.

The dragon and rider made their way to the dining hall which they passed on the way to their room. The three boys from the throne room earlier. They took all three seats on the far side. Each of them held a mischievous grin on their faces. They looked to be about seven or eight years old.

'_Triplets. Why did it have to be triplets? That's got to be worse than Ruff and Tuff are. Well worse than they were at their peaks, anyway.'_ The two had grown up fast during the invasion. They all had, but not too much.

Opposite of the 'wee devils' were only two chairs and large space. Hiccup gestured a t the chair next to the empty space and asked the boys, "Is this seat fine?" All he received in return was three way non-committal shrug. Rolling his eyes he sat down in the old wooden chair with Toothless right beside him. Seeing as he had some free time before dinner and the boys didn't seem to be the talkative types, Hiccup drew his notebook from a fold in the cloth running around his torso. Opening up to the next available page, he began sketching a design for an updated bola launcher. He had a soft spot for it, it introduced him to Toothless.

They sat in silence until they heard audible thunking of the King's wooden leg on the stone steps. Hiccup quickly returned his sketch book to its place in the folds of his barrowed clothes.

"Ah. Lad I see you found the forge alright." The King and his wife

took their seats at either end of the wooden table. The princess came running down soon after and slid into the empty seat on the far side of the Night Fury, just as the evening was brought into the grand hall. Hiccup then followed the lead of Fergus and the triplets and began to quickly pile his plate with food, while Toothless was given a large dish of fish and Elinor forced Merida to eat with some sort of recognizable manners.

Fergus looked up from his plate with a leg of fowl in hand, took a medium sized bite and said, "So, Hiccup where are you from lad?"

Hiccup swallowed his mouthful, "I'm from a village in the far North. On the edge of Viking Territory." It wasn't a total lie he figured. Berk was on the northern border.

"Ah now that is some dangerous country. Is that how you lost your leg?" The cries of "Fergus!" and "Dad!" were instantaneous. Fergus visibly flinched at the berating. "What? I was just trying to make polite conversation with the boy!"

Hiccup cleared his throat, "It's fine, really. Vikings didn't take my leg," he smiled down into his plate, "I did something stupid and crazy to try and save some people and I paid a small price for it."

"Oh come on lad!" cried Fergus, "there has got to be one hell of a tale there!"

"I got the same answer earlier when I asked him," piped the princess from her seat.

Hiccup grinned and scratched his scaly friend behind his ears, "It's really a story that deserves much stronger drink."

The King's face lit up and went to order the required beverages when a look from his wife let the request die in his throat. "Ah, yes. Another time."

Elinor wiped her mouth and looked at the human guest at her table, "So is being a black smith a family trade?"

Hiccup gave his host a slight grimace that was masked by a small smile and shook his head, "I was the village mess up. I was apprenticed to the black smith to try and keep me out of harm's way."

This prompted the one of the triplets to speak up to the rest of the table for the first time that evening, "Those scars aren't from smithing."

"No." said hiccup taking a large bite of the strange green food. "No they aren't. They're from helping my dad with the family trade."

The table was silent for a few moments as they absorbed the information. Merida finally broke the silence, "What is the family trade exactly, Hiccup?"

"Protecting the village of sorts." Hiccup quickly finished his food, "May I retire for the night?" He wanted to leave

The King smiled, "Of course, lad! You have had a hard day."

With a small bow he turned and went up the stair case and returned to his borrowed room. He walked over to the bags still tied to the saddle and removed his armor. The bear had done some serious damage to the armor he needed to repair. Setting the most of his it aside he took his torso armor and his repair supplies.

Hiccup sat on the bed with his leather scrap and damaged armor and started to repair it with skilled hands. Before he could make any meaningful progress on it however, he saw Toothless' ears prick up. Instinctually Hiccup tensed. Instead of an enemy crashing through the door, there was a knock at it. Confused, he called, "It's unlocked."

The door opened to reveal Merida, "I wanted to apologize for what happened at dinner. We didn't mean to make you uncomfortable." She said fiddling slightly nervously with her dress.

Hiccup gave her a small smile, "Don't worry about it. It was like a meal back home really."

Merida gave him a bit of an almost confused look '_What kind of place did the boy live?' _"Then why did you leave so abruptly?" asked Merida.

'_Because I didn't want to let it slip I'm a Viking Chief to the King of potential hostiles.' _"I got homesick," he half-lied to her, "It's been three weeks since I've left my home and I'm worried about my people."

Merida came deeper into the room and leaned against one of the posts of the bed. With eyes blazing with concern, curiosity, and a hint of suspicion she asked, "How bad off is it?"

Hiccup sighed and stopped repairing his armor. Taking a deep breath he said, "A few months back we were attacked by a man named Drago. Now we had faced invasions before but, never like this. He had an army of dragons and mercenaries. We won and broke his control on the dragons," Hiccup paused and took a deep breath, "But he wiped out about a third of the village, burned our forests and sparse crops, and ended our ability to fish with any success."

Merida as quiet. Unlike most things the boy told her this wasn't vague or strange. This was sincere. This was devastation. "I'm so sorry lad, lad."

Hiccup shrugged, "It's way I'm out here." There was a stiff silence for the next few moments after that statement. Neither one of them knew what else could be said on the matter. "Well, I'm going to go to bed now. Soâ€¦" Hiccup trailed off.

Merida turned to a shade of light red. "Of course. Of course." She made her way to the heavy wooden door and exited. Just before it closed, however, she stuck her head in, "Thanks for pulling me out of the water."

"Anytime. Good night Princess." Hiccup picked up his tools and went back to work. After an hour had passed he had repaired it to

completion and then drifted off to sleep.

At the village on the Isle of Berk

Valka stood in silence by her husband's memorial. It wasn't large. It was a medium sized stone coming only to her knee and was identical to the stones of the former chiefs around it. It was adorned with only his name and a few words. 'Have Honor. Fear Nothing.' Valka brushed the small tear from her eye and wiped her hand on her side. She couldn't show weakness now. She was acting chief while her son was on this mission. The runes in the stone were her strength as of late. It was hell to watch her people suffer. _' My honor says to trust my son. I will not fear for him. He will return.' _

6. Chapter 6

****AN:** This is the newest chapter. Not much else. Please direct all questions to my inbox.**

****Sorry** about the long wait. I had a sudden influx of papers to write. By the way advice to any highschool seniors and college freshman: It gets a fraction more difficult every semester, Don't procrastinate.**

****And here we go.****

****I own nothing.****

****OF BOWS AND DRAGONS****

****Chapter 6****

'Knock knock knock.'

Hiccup opened his eyes suddenly and quickly bolted upright much to the displeasure of his injured side. Pain snapped his mind back to where he was and the previous days events came rushing back to him in a flurry. He relaxed slightly and gave the concerned dragon in the corner a nod that he was alright. Another knock at the door made Hiccup get out of his borrowed bed. Clutching his throbbing side he stumbled to the door tripping over different items strewn across the floor. He let out a loud stream of colorful curses that could make Gobber blush. When he finally reached the door he opened it quickly, startling the already timid looking servant boy.

"It's ti-time for breakfast, s-sir." the boy said, his voice trembling as he spoke.

The young chief's face softened immediately. "Thanks. Sorry about all that, uh, language. I tripped getting out of bed. I didn't mean to frighten you."

That seemed to relax the young boy somewhat but, the sight of the black beast that had come to investigate the door. "Uh-uh." he stammered before he turned and bolted down the hall.

Hiccup shrugged and shut the door. He stepped over to the mirror by the wash basin. Carefully and gently unwrapped the blood streaked bandages. The scene underneath was not in as such a dire shape as he

had thought. The flesh around the stitches was red and irritated but definitely was not infected.

Taking a rag and soaking it in the wash basin, he washed his wounds. The dried blood cleaned easily. He took a bandage from the bags by his bed and rewrapped his midsection.

'_If I keep the activity to a minimum I can be gone in a couple of days.'_

--AT THE GREAT HALL--

The leaders of the Kingdom of DunBroch sat at the breakfast table in relative silence with their kids.

"So, messengers arrived last night after dark. They bring news from the other clans," started Fergus after taking a large chunk from his piece of toast.

Merida's hand unconsciously tightened on her eating utensil and her eyes flicked from her father to the stuffed bear in the corner. "What was their message?"

Elinor intervened, "We haven't heard them yet. They were hit hard by rough seas and storms on the way over. The message isn't urgent. They must rest."

Fergus nodded, "They are resting and when they are able they'll give it to us."

Merida grimaced still unsure, "So is there anything I have to do today?"

The Queen gave her daughter a small smile, "Nothing today. Why don't you take Hiccup around and show him the town and around the castle for the day."

"That sounds fine to me," came a voice of the visiting male. Hiccup was descending the stone steps favoring his left side. His face revealed that he had not slept well either. Toothless, however, looked as cheerful as ever. The rider and his dragon took up their seats from the night before.

Merida's face split into a wide smile, "Mornin, Lad!" She then gave the dragon a scratch on the chin and she and the family, were shocked at the sound of pleasure from the dragon and the fainting of it soon after with a pleased look on his face.

Hiccup let out a bellowing laugh to the faces of the monarchy, "Every dragon loves to have their chins scratched. It always ends with the same reaction. Not even the terrifying and fearsome Night Fury." Toothless ears perked up. He was fierce. He was terror. Ever so subtly he smacked his human in the head with his tail. "Ow! Thanks for nothing. You useful reptile." Toothless' only response was his namesake grin.

The Scots at the table, while amused, had their curiosity piqued by the name 'Night Fury'. Fergus voiced these concerns, "So I take it that your dragon is one of these 'Night Furies'?"

"The one and only," said Hiccup taking a bite of his food.

Elinor raised an eyebrow, "The only one?" she asked in disbelief.

"Yep. He's the only one anyone's ever seen. Not even Toothless has seen another Night Fury."

Hiccup took another couple bites of food, "Up until I shot him down, no human had ever actually seen one. Village policy was that they were the unholy offspring of lightning and death itself. We supposed to run instead of the usual kill on sight."

"Whoa hold on a minute boy," called Merida, "What do you mean you shot him down?"

"It's how we met. I used to be the village burden and was always in the way, especially during dragon attacks. So, one night I slipped out and shot him down with a bola launcher."

The three boys and Merida leaned forward. "Is that when you got the respect of your village?"

"Not in the slightest." Hiccup chuckled, "No he landed in the forest and in a crazy turn of events I set free a dozen dragons and damaged parts of the village."

A trio of hearty laughs came from the otherwise silent triplets across from the table. This made Hiccup's face split into a wide grin. The happiness was infectious around the table and within moment everyone there was spilling happiness.

Elinor looked to her daughter who was grabbing her bow and quiver from the leg it was resting against. The Queen almost wanted to comment on how her daughter ought to be more lady like but decided against it., "Be back by dinner. And be careful!"

Merida rolled her eyes, "Yes, mum." She grabbed the young chief's hand and dragged him out with Toothless in tow.

Fergus looked over at his wife but with a slightly concerned face, "Is it a good idea to let her wander around the village with our daughter unsupervised? I mean I told you my suspicions about him being a Viking."

"Husband, were he immediately hostile he would have harmed her in the woods. Just be cautious."

Fergus looked down and nodded, "Fair. But I'm keeping an eye on the lad."

"I'd be disappointed if you didn't."

Suddenly the door burst open and a runner from the docks came running into the room. He ran directly up to the king panting heavily. Taking a hurried breath he tried to deliver his message. All that came out however, was a rough wheezing sound.

"Calm down boy. Catch your breath."

The messenger sucked in a deep breath he said, "The clan Messengers have awakened. They wait at the docks." Quickly before sprinting back out of the door.

"That boy's gonna have himself a heart attack. Shall we my dear?"

The pair proceeded to make their way quickly to the docks. Stopping only long enough for Fergus to whisper orders to a guard captain.

At the docks the two monarchs were directed to the ship the messengers had arrived in. It wasn't hard to find really. It was the one that had obviously been heavily damaged by a serious storm. Climbing the gang plank difficult given the knotty wooden leg. On deck finding the recovering messengers was simple. They entered into the lone cabin toward the back of the small ship.

"Sire!" called the three men sitting on the cots on the far wall. They tried to stand in a sort of drunken fashion. They sat down quickly after their king gave a small chuckle and motioned for them to sit down.

The king and queen pulled chairs from the table and took a seat. "Now lads what is your message?"

-With Hiccup and Merida-

Hiccup couldn't stop scratching.

Despite his insistence that he had changed to bandage that morning, Merida forced Hiccup to go back to the healer's hut. The healer had been much less than impressed with the state of his handy work.

"I told you not to even try to put on a bloody shirt you halfwit!" shouted Conner, as he bound the wounds tighter than he had the previous day. "This is how you lost your damn leg."

Conner continued to rant for several more minutes until he shoved the pair roughly out of his place of business.

"Well. I guess I am no longer his preferred customer." Said Hiccup scratching his very itchy bandage.

Merida gave a hearty laugh. "No. It's not that. Connor cares deeply for his patients. Not to mention fighting a bear to save a princess is a big booster." Hiccup just blushed. "Wanna hear a story about one of the last bear I faced?"

--_LINEBREAK_--_Back to the King_--

"So, the clans are demanding to force Merida into marriage again?" asked Fergus calmly. The messengers nodded nervously. Turning to his wife he said, "I would refuse but a king is nothing without his people," his voice was softer than usual. He was upset by this turn of events. Turning back to face the messengers he grit his teeth. "Tell the leaders of the clan this, and use these words exactly: We accept the demands you have forced upon us. We will send for them when we determine an acceptable time."

Fergus and Elinor left abruptly after giving the message over.

Neither one of them were remotely pleased with the message. The clans had agreed to allow Merida and the heirs to choose their own spouse. According to the messengers, the clans have rethought this based on the murmurings of unifying of the tribesmen to the north.

"I don't like this," stated Fergus as he descended the plank, "A harsh winter is on the horizon, Viking tribes are unifying under a single banner, and the clans were going back on their word. This is not good."

Elinor put a gentle hand on her husband's shoulder, "Fergus, have faith. We've survived Viking advances before, even in the dead of winter. Now we just have to deal with the other clans."

"Oh, just most of the damn kingdom, then"

"Husband!"

Fergus gave his wife a pleasant smile and they continued back to the castle with heavier hearts. Little did they know, another player was about to be fully revealed in their little game.

At the great hall Fergus was greeted by the guard he had sent on orders. He was quickly approached by him. "Sire, I searched the lad's room like you asked. I found this." He showed the king a pauldron, presumably from the armor Hiccup reportedly had worn.

Etched into the leather was a red symbol, one that made Fergus's blood freeze in his veins.

He didn't know the symbol exactly. But it was similar to ones he saw on the battle field so many years before. Perhaps he had seen, however.

The lad was Viking.

****End of Chapter.****

****This chapter has finished. Please leave any questions and comments with my inbox homies.****

7. Chapter 7

****AN:** This is the newest chapter. As a point I just want to say: I am very sorry. Many things have happened. I discovered and listened to all of Night Vale, had an anniversary with my girlfriend, gone to see Night Vale on their US tour, wrote six papers, watched an unholy amount of movies, and played through every Kingdom Hearts game. On the bright side: I have the next two and a half chapters written! So the posts of the next three chapters will be much more regular.

****Not much else to say. Please direct all questions to my inbox. Review and tell your internet friends.****

****And here we go.****

****I own nothing.****

****OF BOWS AND DRAGONS****

****Chapter 7: The Trial of Hiccup Horrendous Haddock III Part I****

Etched into the leather was a red symbol, one that made Fergus's blood freeze in his veins.

He didn't know the symbol exactly. But it was similar to ones he saw on the battle field so many years before. Perhaps he had seen it, however.

The lad was Viking.

With Merida and Hiccup

"and so in the end, my mother turned back into a woman and the clans accepted my right to choose." Merida finished her tale with a lopsided smile. The story had filled their walk with a friendly air. They had ended up in the tavern at a table in the back.

Hiccup took a sip from his mug of water while Toothless napped at their feet. Merida's tale was an almost unbelievable. People turning into bears? That was old, ancient magic. It was so unheard of to even hear accounts of it. "Wow. A person becoming an animal. That's old and dangerous magic. Ancient even. You're lucky to have been able to reverse it."

Merida raised a curious eyebrow and hid her suspicions, "That seems a bold claim. Most us highlanders regard magic with a sort of neutrality. Depends on the use." Hiccup's hand clenched and light sweat broke out at his temples. He was nervous and Merida could tell. She forced her feelings down and away from her heart and had to think logically. "That's another odd thing about you. Besides the obvious. Lack of knowledge of custom, your funny accent, strange dress at your arrival and the list goes on." The gaze into his eyes made Hiccup's blood run cold. The usual warmth in her eyes was farther than his home right now. "Who are you?" she asked.

Toothless' head came up when he heard the pleading in the young female's voice. That and the jingling he could hear right outside the door. Thinking nothing of it the black beast lowered his head once more into this humans lap with the intent of taking a nap. Hiccup could pull himself out of this. He always did.

Hiccup stammered trying to find an answer that would allow him to remain out of chains "I'mâ€¦"

It turned out that neither the dragon nor his rider were successful in their goals to nap or avoid conflict. Three guards burst through the door and headed straight for the foreigner. "Hiccup! You are to come for questioning by order of the King!" The lead guard made a move to grab Hiccup. That as his mistake. In a flash the side of his head was pushed against the worn table and his arm was held at a painful angle. Meanwhile, Toothless began the process of forming a fireball. He was simply waiting for the signal from his friend. So he waited with a blue glow coursing down his ridges.

At the same time the other Scots surrounding the Viking drew their weapons. The guards pressed the tips of their blades into the back of

the offender while the princess' bow creaked as the arrow was aimed for a kill. This surprisingly was not aimed at the young man.

That's how they stood for several moments. None of them daring to even draw breath. Realizing he would die where he stood, Hiccup released his hostage and raised his hands in surrender. "Toothless. Stand down."

The dragon's head lowered and the glow faded from his mouth and down his spine. He held a look of defiance in his emerald eyes as the guardsman secured his mouth with a leather strap. It really wouldn't hold the flaming maw but they didn't know that.

Hiccup's hands were clapped into irons and he was given some jostling to discourage any resistance. Then the party was led to the castle for the judgment. The whole trip Hiccup refused to meet Merida's eyes. She wanted to know why. Why her friend hid who he was and why he is being called enemy.

__-The Castle DunBroch-__

The monarchs sat in silence while they waited for the guards they sent to retrieve Hiccup. They had been vague as to the methods they were to use. This was worrisome to Elinor. The town guard had strong memories concerning the war with the Viking tribes. The state of the captive might be questionable. Especially since they had assumptions that the boy might be a Viking.

Thankfully, the guards came through the back door with Hiccup looking a little worse for the wear but nothing too serious. The young man was then forced down on to his knees before the two monarchs. The dragon merely stood next to his friend.

"Dad! What is the meaning of this?" yelled Merida as she stormed into the room behind the guards and their two prizes. "The boy hasn't done anything to deserve this."

The court was in silence at that remark.

Fergus sighed making eye contact with Hiccup. "No he hasn't. Not yet. But he still deserves to be there." Fergus stood up and grabbed an object from his side and tossed it to the ground in front of Hiccup. "This proves that. I need a damn good explanation from you boy."

The guards, sensing the anger of their king and having a fairly good idea of that symbol that is, drew their weapons.

Hiccup looked down at his pauldron that had come to rest in front of him. "This is a piece of my armor. It bears the mark of my village. It is the mark of the Viking tribe of the Isle of Berk."

Merida was livid at this statement. Hiccup had pulled her from death's grip more than once without a thought. This had understandably forged some quick trust as other emotions she wouldn't quite admit to. The betrayal she felt surrounded her like a cloak. "So it was all lies then? Were you just sent here to gain information on us so that you could go back to your village and bring an army? Are your people even dying?"

Venom dripped from her words that burned into Hiccup's heart. She had

attacked both his honor and his pride, two of the most sacred things to a Viking. Not to mention any other feelings he even remotely felt. It hurt worse than a strike to the face would. He forced himself to his feet and managed a single step toward Merida before the guards surrounding him. "I never lied to you. Or them."

Merida launched a punch directly into Hiccup's jaw and staggered him. Before she could continue her assault, Fergus intervened, "Send him and his dragon to the dungeon for the night. Perhaps that will lose his tongue."

The dungeons of DunBroch were carved directly into the stone underneath the castle. They were soggy. That was the best word he could use to describe his current surroundings. The cell he and Toothless were placed in was made up of four stone walls with patches of moss. The door to the cell was made of iron bars and had obviously not been designed for a dragon sized occupant to need to use it. The floor was roughly hewn from the natural bedrock beneath the castle. The cells were designed to make the occupants sweat.

Hiccup rested his head against the wall. Such is life. Hiccup rubbed his rather sore jaw. He almost preferred being berated. Merida could throw one hell of a punch.

The dragon and his boy rested against one another for hours on end. They had begun to doze off, letting the worry of what was to happen to them when they were called before the royal court. They were jarred from their sleep by a banging on their cell door. Looking up they saw a terrified serving boy who was no older than Hiccup was when he had first met Toothless.

"The king ordered the meal to be brought to you." he held out the tray piled with fish for Toothless and a small meal for Hiccup.

Hiccup stood up and took the tray from the trembling boy. "Thank you," he said with a small smile. He sat down dividing the food on the tray between them. The boy stood less rigid now almost calm, but not quite. Hiccup looked up at her and when he saw that he wasn't leaving was confused. "Is there something else?"

The lad looked a little taken aback at Hiccup's gentle tone. "No. It's just that I expected Vikings to be bigger, meaner. Same with dragons."

Hiccup smiled softly at the servant. "Most Vikings are. Me and mine are not typical Vikings."

The boy nodded slowly and turned to leave. When he reached the door he waved briefly before leaving the small cell.

Toothless finished his portion of the evening meal rather quickly. It was nowhere near enough to satisfy his appetite. That was price he paid for standing by his human. His friend. His partner. Toothless was prepared to fight for Hiccup tomorrow if worst came to worst. He would die before he let his human fall. After all, he was an outcast among dragons and Hiccup was an outcast among his people. This made them outcasts together. A family. He sighed deeply as the two of them laid down to sleep.

****AN:** That wraps up the seventh chapter. Eight will be up in one weeks' time. Until then, review and let me know what you think.

****War and Peace****

****RedhoodandtheOutlaws****

8. Chapter 8

****AN:** See? I wasn't lying. A new Chapter. One note before you carry on: The chapter that I said was a half chapter before has been redistributed. This chapter and the one set to follow it will be longer than usual chapter. After the next chapter, the next chapter will come out two weeks after.******

****Also,** I have officially gained an unofficial beta. So from here on out you should see many fewer grammar mistakes that I miss. That is the reason this chapter is early. We want to know what you think of a beta'd chapter.******

****Not much else to say.** Please direct all questions to my inbox. Review and tell your internet friends.******

****And here we go.****

****I own nothing.****

****OF BOWS AND DRAGONS****

****Chapter 8: The Trial of Hiccup Horrendous Haddock III Part II****

Toothless finished his portion of the evening meal rather quickly. It was nowhere near enough to satisfy his appetite. That was price he paid for standing by his human. His friend. His partner. Toothless was prepared to fight for Hiccup tomorrow if worst came to worst. He would die before he let his human fall. After all, he was an outcast among dragons and Hiccup was an outcast among his people. This made them outcasts together. A family. He sighed deeply as the two of them laid down to sleep.

__-_The Next Morning__ _

Fergus sat upon the Throne of DunBroch massaging his temples. He was in a difficult position. Accounts of the boy's character and manners were given from the Healer Angus, the servant boy, and even his own daughter. By all of these accounts, he was a decent boy who was trying to peacefully assimilate his people into a new land. His daughter was angry though. The boy had wormed into her heart and she felt naught but betrayal.

He himself had felt no disdain for Hiccup on a personal level, just an unnatural amount of distrust. Perhaps it was the war so many years ago.

He signed heavily. These were the moments he wished to not be their king. He beckoned for the guard in the corner of the room. "Go and retrieve the Viking. Let us finish this trial and be done with it."

At once the young man nodded and ran for the dungeons.

While he waited for them to return, his wife and daughter came to take their places for this event. Elinor was of the same mind as her husband and felt no ill will from the boy. Merida, on the other hand, was seething. This was bound to be an interesting day.

Soon the door leading to the depths of the castle opened and revealed three guards and a disheveled looking Hiccup and Toothless. As with the day before they were marched before those of royal blood.

Fergus leaned back in his seat. "So lad. Are you ready to speak your case?"

Hiccup stood up a little straighter and all weariness left him. His pride was a Viking trademark. "I am," he said.

"Good. Then tell us why you and your fiery lizard have come to our island."

Toothless growled lightly and that remark but was silenced with a gesture of Hiccup's shackled wrist. "We are a scouting party for our village."

"For an invasion? For war?" questioned Fergus as he unconsciously gripped his weapon tightly.

"No. For amnesty," replied Hiccup firmly, "Our island can barely support life anymore. We have to leave or to fade. The trading ships rarely pass as far north as we are and we have nothing to trade if they do come, as our waters are empty and our lands are scorched."

The Queen raised a questioning brow at the young man on trial, "Then why are you here? Shouldn't you be trying to get help from your kind?"

The room was filled with a pregnant silence as all eyes turned to Hiccup. "I was sent out by my village to seek new lands and our _kind_ will not give us quarter."

Fergus elected to ignore the burning question in his mind- why the other Vikings were shunning his village- and asked a more pertinent question, "Did you plan to take these lands by force?"

Merida scoffed at her father's question. "Of course they would. They're Vikings."

Fergus' head rounded on his daughter. "Merida! Let the man speak."

Hiccup smiled softly as Fergus turned back to face him, "If the land was occupied, we were going to ask for amnesty. Ours may be a warrior culture where a death in battle is considered a best case scenario, but a Viking's duty is to his people."

The warriors in the room, including the king, nodded at the words of the logic of the young Viking chief in front of them. Before the trial could continue on its course, however, the grand doors to the hall burst open and a runner came sprinting up to the king clutching

a worn piece of parchment as well as a much fresher piece.

The runner gasped loudly as he gave them to the king before he sprinted back in the direction he came. "That guy is gonna have a heart attack," mumbled Hiccup to Toothless, causing the obsidian dragon to snicker loudly.

Fergus cleared his throat and his face was grim after apparently reading the newer note, "Seems there are some holes in your story lad." The older parchment was thrown at Hiccup's feet. "Most pressing now is why this letter bearing your villages seal was delivered only days before the war began with the Viking Confederacy. This letter was never translated from your people's runes but we assume it was a declaration of war."

Hiccup reached down and plucked up the letter and turned it over in his hands to see the broken wax seal.

"It predates my reign as king. I had the scholars search the records for any symbol that matched that pauldron of yours."

Hiccup stared at the letter not caring what the king was saying. "This isn't a declaration of war. Vikings don't send warning. And even if we did, my village had no part in that war." Hiccup unfolded the letter and scanned the Nordic runes with ease. "This is a letter from Stoick the Vast. He was trying to warn you of an attack. At that time we were at the height of the Dragon War and since we were at the northern border of the territoryâ€¦." He trailed off and took a heavy breath, "He valued our honor. Unjustified war would have tarnished that."

Fergus stroked his beard deep in thought. "I've heard of this Stoick the Vast. A fierce warrior in his own right. In the time leading up to the war, he was reported to have taken on ten men at once before he was even injured. Not to mention the stories of him fighting dragons, or what I'd heard from that spat he had with the other Vikingsâ€¦." Fergus trailed off when his wife gave him a scathing look.

Merida looked surprised at the news of the letter. While she was sure he was telling the truth, she had to been lied to by him before. He was quite convincing with those solemn eyes of his. "How do we know the letter says what it does?"

"I, Hiccup Horrendous Haddock III, swear on my name, the name of my father, Stoick the Vast, and my honor that all I have said and will say at this trial is true," replied Hiccup with a look solemnity.

The king and his family seemed to be at least partly familiar with Viking values and when combined with Hiccup's comments took the honor with only a couple grains of salt.

"Well that's one misunderstanding that's taken care of. But the question still stands: why are you here? In Scotland?" said Fergus leaned back in his chair and smiled slightly

So Hiccup told them the big picture. He explained that after the war ended the other tribes regarded Berk coldly. The story continued to the Council of 21 that happened several months after the war. Peace

was almost struck on a deal to end the dragon threat. Peace never stood a chance as Stoick was the sole survivor of a mass assassination, and the other tribes blamed Stoick for his survival and hated him.

This led to open hostility and minor skirmishes for years. Hiccup explained that the final straw was when he and Toothless had helped to make peace between their village and the dragon nest to the north of Berk, but he didn't explain how it had been made. He kept that to himself.

Hiccup glossed over the more recent war with the other Viking tribes. He didn't really want to talk about the violent acts he and his people did to defend their hearth and home. When he came to the more recent events, Hiccup became slightly more emotional. "After Drago had his Alpha Dragon kill Stoick, he moved onto our village. He razed the village almost to the ground. My dad had named me his successor and I was crowned immediately. Soon after, it became apparent to all of us that the island was dying. The Elder then asked that it be me who negotiates amnesty."

Fergus and his family sat dumbstruck at the tale they were given. It made logical sense. Still, the boy was a Viking. "I need to time consider this situation." He gestured to the guards surrounding Hiccup, "Take him to his quarters- not the dungeon."

Hiccup and Toothless walked to the bed chamber without much struggle, hoping that they might get to keep their heads. He was unshackled and then he and Toothless were roughly shoved into the room. The door slammed shut and locked quickly after that.

"Well Buddy, we are possibly reaching the end of the line."

The Night Fury pinned Hiccup and stared into his human's eyes trying to convey the message of "Stay positive". Besides, Toothless had worked out how they could escape fairly easily.

Hiccup chuckled and pushed the dragon down. "I guess you're right, bud." He looked around the room at the disarray of his belongings. Upon closer inspection it became evident that the guards had taken his armor, weapons, and most of the other equipment, but thankfully, had elected to leave the medical supplies from his saddle bags.

Gathering those supplies and stripping his torso, Hiccup stepped over to the wash basin in the corner of the room. The slashes from the bear attack three days prior were red from the jostling he had received during his time as a prisoner. Hiccup set to work scrubbing and cleaning the blood, grime, and dirt from the dungeon.

It didn't take long to clean, he had done it so many times before. He took one of the few remaining bandages out of his bags. He had only just starting the wrapping his wounds when there was a knock at the door. Before he could say anything, the door opened and a tray, piled with even more food than there had been the night before, was pushed through.

Unlike the night before, this wasn't a servant behind the tray. It was Merida. "Hello. Thought you two might like some lunch." Her eyes came to rest on the topless Hiccup. "I wanted to talk."

Hiccup finished wrapping his bandage hastily before moving away warily. He got hit last time he was next to her. "Hi— What are you doing here?" Hiccup stumbled into the saddle bag on the floor before regaining his equilibrium. "—are you doing here?" Next to him Toothless let out a rough bout of laughter. His human could go to war without flinching, but a female could turn him into a hatchling. "Shut up, you useless reptile."

Merida suppressed a laugh but still rolled her eyes. "I'm here to talk, lad," she set down the tray. "Why didn't you tell me?"

"Tell you what?" Hiccup sat on the bed, "That I'm a Viking? That would have gone well. 'Hi, I just met you unconscious in the forest and I'm one of your peoples sworn enemy.' Let face it- you would have put an arrow up my—"

"I get it," said Merida, cutting off the boy's rant, "You still should have been honest. Not tellin' me was as bad as lying." Merida shook her head as though to clear it. How could one man be so annoying? "Look, they're gonna come and get you in the next couple of hours after my dad finishes meeting with his advisors. Do you need anything else?"

Hiccup stood up slowly, "My armor, please. If I'm to be judged a Viking, I might as well look the part." Merida nodded slowly and began to exit the room. "Princess, I'm sorry for lying." Merida flashed Hiccup a small smile and quickly left the room.

Merida exited the bed chamber and went to find her father. She sought him out in one of the side chambers of the Grand Hall. "Dad?" she called bursting through the doors.

"What is it, my dear?" asked Fergus silencing the others with a short gesture.

"Hiccup wants his armor back."

One of the councilors, a short, bald man with a nose that had been broken several times, spoke up with great indignation, "Armor? The boy is a Viking, and the only this he deserves is an ax across his neck."

Fergus rubbed his face and prepared to rebuke the man, but the other councilor beat him to the punch. Literally. The blow caught the shorter man on his already twisted nose. "Shut up, Nathair. You want to kill every one. The boy is an envoy who means no harm. His village could be an asset to us."

"Durall, calm yourself. Nathair, go have Angus look at your nose. Merida, why does he want his armor?" asked Fergus with practiced ease.

Merida smiled as though these all these actions were common place as Nathair left hurriedly, clutching his nose. "He said that if he is being judged as a Viking, he would like to look the part."

Durall nodded, "That sounds reasonable my king."

"I'll have the armor sent to him right away." Fergus walked his

daughter to the door, "Do me a favor and ensure your demon little brothers are set to come to this thing."

After ushering her out of the room, Fergus sat heavily in a chair by a table in the corner of the room. "What am I going to do, Durall? She is going to find out whats happening with the other clans."

Durall grimaced, "Not to mention your plan for Hiccup."

"She'll kill me for that."

"Most likely."

****AN:** That wraps up the eight chapter. NINE will be up in one weeks' time. Until then, review and let my beta and I know what you think.

****War and Peace****

****RedhoodandtheOutlaws****

9. Chapter 9

****AN:** New chapter for you all. My beta and I would like you all to enjoy this. SO ENJOY IT! There has been reshuffling and this chapter is now a normal length. Chapter 10 is undergoing some final revisions and chapter 11 is well underway. ******

****To the guest reviewer who I felt was being sarcastic in their review:** The reason the Scots' accents are not written is because they are difficult to write. It may help if you use your imagination and read it in their voices.******

****Not much else to say. Please direct all questions to my inbox. Review and tell your internet friends.****

****And here we go.****

****I own nothing.****

****OF BOWS AND DRAGONS****

****Chapter 9: The Judgement of Hiccup Horrendous Haddock III****

__-Castle DunBroch-__

Hiccup was dressed in his full Viking regalia. His well-worn armor was shining and he was prepared to accept the judgement handed down from this leader of country. Toothless hadn't been saddled, however, much to the dragon's dismay. Hiccup couldn't risk it looking like he was trying to escape. Not that he didn't want too.

The knock on the door came just as the young chief had tightened the last strap on his gauntlets. It was time to go. Grabbing his helmet, Hiccup followed the set of guards down the familiar stone corridor to his fate. Oddly enough he was left unrestrained. This boosted the combined morale of both dragon and rider.

There were a few more Scots assembled in the Grand Hall then Hiccup had seen previously. The most notable were a short, bald man with a purple nose and a much taller man with thick red hair. Those two were standing on opposite ends of the royal family. The shorter man was standing next to Merida who was trying to sit as far away from him as possible. Hiccup and Toothless walked to the center of the room where they had stood several times before.

The court stared at him in his full armor for different reasons. Some out of awe, others fear. A couple of them thought he looked rather dashing in that armor.

Fergus straightened up and cleared his throat, "Hiccup Horrendous Haddock III, in case you hadn't noticed, you are accused of being a danger to the kingdom and a spy from our enemies. The punishment for which is death." Fergus stood up from his seat and began to approach Hiccup. "You are the son of one of the most feared and respected Vikings in all the world. You are a Viking Chief and therefore an inherent enemy of this kingdom."

Hiccup made an attempt at defending himself from the words of the mountain of a man an arm's length away from him but was silenced by a gesture from the king.

"Yet it cannot be ignored what you have done for me personally, as you saved my daughter twice and placed yourself in mortal danger because of it. You seem to have the goal in mind of peace and safety for your village as well. For these reasons I am naming you a friend to the kingdom."

The room was full of different reactions. The guards seem to radiate quiet dissatisfaction. Elinor and the triplets were content that the nice young man wasn't going to be put to death. Durall simply smiled happily. Merida was relieved, and released a breath she hadn't realized she was holding. Despite her initial anger toward Hiccup, she had come to understand why he'd lied. She still liked the idea of calling him friend.

Nathair, the short councilor, had the opposite reaction of the princess. His face became flush with anger and his fists clenched. He had wanted the brat dead. He was scum. He would ruin everything Nathair had planned.

Hiccup and Toothless let out small sighs of relief at having been told that they were safe. "Thank you, King Fergus. If your men will return my belongings, we'll leave your kingdom before the day is done."

Fergus raised a brow, "Your things are on their way to your chamber now. However, instead of leaving, you should come and speak with me about amnesty for your village."

Hiccup was shocked and it showed on his face. "You'd give us an asylum?"

"Aye, lad. Now come- we have much to discuss." With a swish of his cape he led Hiccup and Toothless into the side meeting chamber. The table in the corner had been laid out with a metal pitcher, two cups, parchment, and some writing utensils.

"Hiccup, I have some terms for your peoples shelter here. But before that: what can your people offer to the not only the kingdom, but this City?"

Hiccup sighed and took the seat closest to him. "Warriors for your fights, steel for your armies, and hardy winter crops. Not to mention the dragons we will be bringing with. We can direct a trade route to your kingdom with goods from the far south and east. What are your conditions?"

Fergus smiled and took the seat opposite of Hiccup, "I want your warriors to fight beside us defend us. Be brothers in arms."

"We're not what most people would think- Vikings value a number of virtues. We never fight without a cause. We have a sort of code from the Havamal, among our village especially, 'Where you recognize evil, speak out against it and give no truces to your enemies.' Can I have your assurances that the causes for war will be just?"

"You're imposing restrictions on my conditions?" asked Fergus calmly.

"I'm asking for a safe place to move my village. I'm not laying down at your feet."

Fergus let out a hearty laugh, "That's what I want to hear!" At the lost and confused look on Hiccups face, the king calmed a bit, "I want allies who will think for themselves. Not do what I want to increase their own gains."

Hiccup let out the shaky breath he had been holding. "I'mâ€¦ I'm really glad that- that is the case."

Fergus smiled at the lad; warrior and Viking yet he was still barely a child.

The two of them spent the next few hours coming to terms with an amnesty agreement. Hiccup suggested bringing the Viking trade ships to the shores of DunBroch to increase the total trade. Fergus firmly disagreed fearing those traders attacking on their own accord. The young chief assured the king that the Trade Tribe was a neutral party. They only ever fought when they were attacked first and hadn't participated in the Viking Confederacy.

The Berk Tribe was given large swaths of the forest about a day' walk beyond the Castle and town wall. On this land they could live as they wish. They would be free to govern themselves under their own laws to an extent. In return they would aid DunBroch in times of need, they would assist trade, and they would open dragon training to the locals of the kingdom.

They had written these in both of their respective written languages. Before Hiccup could move to conclude the agreement, however, Fergus had another term. "In a few months' time there is going to be a gathering of sorts of the four clans in the Kingdom. They are trying, again, to force Merida to marry the winner of the games."

Hiccup's brow furrowed, "Merida said that it was resolved three years ago."

The older man nodded solemnly, "Aye, it was. They've grown restless in the recent months with the trouble brewing northward."

"Fair enough. What does that have to do with this though?"

"I want a participant from your village to compete," he leaned forward and grasped his cup of water and prepared to take a drink, "Specifically, I want you."

The Viking spat the water he had in his mouth all over his dragon who had been napping in the corner. The dragon looked quite indignant to being awoken in this manner, but snickered at Hiccup's wide eyed face. He couldn't quite convey his sounds into meaningful words.

"Lad, it's alright. It's obvious that you fancy her." Fergus smirked at the stuttering boy.

"I just, I, uh enjoy her company."

"Unless I missed something and you go a different way. That's fine too but—" added the king, poking fun at him causing Toothless and him to have a laugh at Hiccup's expense.

Hiccup took a deep breath to clear himself but not the creeping rose coloring through his pale skin. "While I'm not against the idea of getting to know Merida better, courting a woman in Viking society is a partnership. I'm not gonna compete without her consent."

Fergus simply shrugged, "Then we phrase it as such. That your village will only participate with the princess's consent."

The Viking nodded and they made it so. The agreements were signed by both parties. "I will also need to have the village Elder overlook the treaty."

The older man nodded, "Of course! You have to keep your customs." Hiccup looked up and caught Fergus' eye. "What is it, lad?"

"Why did you trust me? I could have been lying."

"You're a good man. Any fool could see that." Fergus paused and stared deep in to Hiccup's eye, seemingly to his soul, "I thought I might take a chance on you. Don't let us down."

Hiccup nodded slowly.

The pair of them rolled their respective parchments and made to leave to small meeting chamber. "Now lad, business is concluded. Let's eat and have a little drink."

"Sounds like what I need at the moment. I'll secure this in my room and be back down."

Fergus laughed and exited behind the boy. "Good man! Hurry back!"

AN: That is a wrap. Good news for the men and women of Berk. Up next is Chapter 11: The Best Laid Plans—

****Review and let me know what you think of the story so far.****

****War and Peace,****

****RedHoodandtheOutlaws****

10. Chapter 10

****AN: Ladies and Gentlemen, it is my pleasure to give you chapter ten of this story. Chapter 11 is underway and will posted as soon as it is done. This will likely be in a week and a half. ****

****Not much else to say. Please direct all questions to my inbox. Review and tell your internet friends.****

****And here we go.****

****I own nothing.****

****OF BOWS AND DRAGONS****

****Chapter 10: The Best Laid Plansâ€|****

_The pair of them rolled their respective parchments and made to leave to small meeting chamber. "Now lad, business is concluded. Let's eat and have a little drink." _

"_Sounds like what I need at the moment. I'll secure this in my room and be back down."_

_Fergus laughed and exited behind the boy. "Good man! Hurry back!"

_

--At Present--

Hiccup rushed pass the table that had been brought back to the center of the hall and barely glanced at the queen or her daughter as he passed. Meanwhile, the three 'wee devils' descended upon Toothless. The dragon rolled his eyes and began to try and shrug off their futile attempts to subdue him.

Fergus took his seat at the table and angled it so he could watch his sons wrestle the mighty beast. Merida leaned towards her father hoping to get his attention. "So, dad, did you reach a suitable arrangement for his people?" Anticipation rolled off of her in waves.

The older man was silent for a moment as he thought about the last clause on the treaty then, he let out a soft chuckle at the antics in front of him. "We did. That young man is a good negotiator with a good head on his shoulders."

Elinor smiled. "Well then its good we that the decision was for him to keep his it."

"I am rather attached to it. I'd hate to lose it," said Hiccup as he strolled down the stone steps. He looked over to his best friend and saw that all three boys were pinned beneath him. The dragon now began

to torture his trapped victims by licking them mercilessly. "Boys, scratch under his jaw!"

One of the tree immediately began doing as he was told. Hiccups advice worked and Toothless collapsed on top of the three terrors. Laughter roared through the hall from the royal family. Hiccup managed to contain his laughter long enough to help free them from the large head pinning them to the ground. Through a series of gestures, they made it apparent that they would have revenge on Hiccup.

They were saved from severe scolding from their mother by the opening of the doors leading to the kitchen opening. From behind them came a variety of savory foods on platters and a couple of barrels that presumably had drinks in them. Hiccup's and the newly awakened Toothless' mouths started to water. "Uhâ€¦ What'sâ€¦ What's the occasion?" asked Hiccup as he took his seat.

The food was set on the table and the cups were filled with drinks appropriate to their owner. Hiccup's was colored similar mead but smelled unfamiliar.

Fergus raised his cup that was filled from the same barrel as Hiccup's. "To new friends! And to peace."

"Here, here!" said Hiccup in reply knocking his cup with the king before chugging the entire contents of the cup in one go. The amber liquid burned strongly as it went down. The cup was slammed back down onto the table. "Oh gods that burns. I love it. What is that?"

The entire table was silent. "Lad, that was whisky. You ought to drink that a bit slower."

"Ah. Well then," he raised the cup, "I'll drink this next one slower. ANOTHER!"

Fergus and Merida laughed loudly. The princess reached over and slugged hi shoulder. "That's the spirit!"

The meal proceeded heartily and all remaining tension in the air bled away. As the food diminished from the table, Fergus and Hiccup had begun to trade stories. It had started with Merida prodding Hiccup to tell the story of how Toothless got his prosthetic tail fin. He refused at first but was eventually convinced to do it by everyone, including Toothless.

Hiccup sighed and knocked back what was left in his cup. "What the hell, why not? I was the village mess up. I couldn't do anything right and I was despisedâ€¦" He launched into the tale of how he had shot down Toothless to get a bit of glory but, he couldn't bring himself to slay the dragon. He had proceeded to study the trapped dragon and learn everything he could about him and his kin. "â€¦ I managed to avoid getting caught and completed training while building him a fin."

Merida looked impressed with Hiccup. Elinor was feeling much better that he was capable of mercy. Fergus looked satisfied with the tale. "That's a good story," he paused to take a drink from his cup. "Have I told you about how I lost my leg to a bear?" At Hiccup's negative he began to tell his story. "So many years ago, we were in the glen,

having a day to ourselves. Merida was young. Only a few years old, and had just gotten her first bow." Elinor frowned slightly at the mention of her daughter getting the weapon. It wasn't proper. "She had wandered off into the woods-"

"I was chasin' a wil-o-wisp. Not wanderin'," interjected Merida.

Fergus huffed. "Hush now. I'm tellin' the story! So me and the guard here her scream and we gathered our weapons to go fight. She came running out of the woods with the biggest bear on her heels. It was Mor'du. The greatest bear. 12 feet tall at least. His face was scarred with a dead eye boring into my heart. Blades stuck out of his black hide." With each word Fergus' hand gestures grew bigger.

"This is my favorite part," whispered Merida to Hiccup.

"Before I could swing my sword Mor'du, bit my leg clean of at the thigh!"

Hiccup smiled and raised his glass in celebration of the valor. "With courage like that you would fit in well with my village."

"My thanks, lad," said the king, returning the gesture.

Merida pushed her plate away. "Well, we heard about one amputation. Let's here another one. How'd you lose your leg?"

"Merida! Don't pry on the boy," scolded Elinor.

Hiccup flashed her a wonderful smile that gave her heart a slight flutter. "It's alright. I did something stupid which made me have to do something crazy." Hiccup finished his fifth cup full in one gulp and waved off the servant who had come to fill it. He needed the liquid courage. "I graduated at the top of my class in fighting dragons. Which won me the right to kill my first dragon in front of the whole village."

"Weren't you working with Toothless on flying at this point?" asked Merida with confusion lacing her voice.

"That was the stupid thing. I tried to show everyone there was no reason to fight them. It almost worked when my dad scared the dragon and it nearly killed me. Dad had the dragon restrained, but only because Toothless helped to corral it. I tried explain that a much larger dragon was forcing the others to attack the village which made him angry that I had seen the nest and hadn't told him. I was disowned by Stoick the Vast."

Merida squeezed his hand at his forlorn expression. Hiccup gave her a thankful smile. "He and the entire village took Toothless and went to the nest. Astrid convinced the others to listen to me. We took the captured dragons and rode to the nest, arriving just after the rest of the fleet. Just in time to see the second biggest dragon I've ever seen burst from the mountain. It had six eyes and thick rough hide."

The triplets gripped each other tight and sat at the edge of their seats waiting for what would happen next. Fergus and Merida was much the same, though Merida was still grasping Hiccup's hand. "The others

distracted him while I went to get Toothless off of the sinking ship. Dad had to pull us out and he made peace with me." Hiccup rubbed his forehead. "Here comes the part where I did something crazy. I got on Toothless, and we got the Green Death to follow us into the sky where his size would be at a disadvantage. We stuck him several times in the wings before he set fire to the clouds. With our cover gone we, sped to the ground. As he went to torch us, Toothless fired into his gas filled mouth-"Toothless unleashed a blast of fire for emphasis, which startled the listeners- "Lighting the dragon on fire. The fin burned, and we got dragged into the exploding dragon. Woke up several weeks later. Didn't have a leg. It got burned right off."

The table was in awe of the story. They had never had heard such a tale. "Wow, lad. That is one hell of a story." Fergus was reclining farther into his seat. "What do you mean that massive beast was the second biggest dragon you've seen?"

Hiccup laughed loudly. "I've seen a bigger dragon. That one wasn't very friendly either."

"Come on, Hiccup! You've got to tell us about that one!" pleaded Merida.

Hiccup just shook his head. "Nope. Not tonight. I have to get some sleep. It's a long trip back to Berk."

Elinor handed her plate to the servant who was coming around to collect the plates. "How long of a trip is it? When can we expect your people?"

"It'll take about a week if I pull a hard flight but, I'll slow it so we can return right away. So, a week and a half there and a week and half back with most of the village. The ships will follow us by a couple of days with everyone else."

Fergus stroked his goatee. "That's a long trip to take by yourself. Not to mention your wounds are still healing."

Hiccup shrugged, "I've had worse. Besides, I have Toothless."

"Still. I wish you would take someone with you."

Merida saw an opportunity open before her eyes. She could ensure Hiccup was still keeping his end of whatever deal he made, she could figure him out, and she could see distant lands. She could go with them. "I'll go with them. I can make sure his wounds stay healthy and-"

"NO!" yelled her mother. "I'll not have you going around unsupervised!"

Fergus sighed. On one hand he had one of the people he trusts most to see the Vikings and make sure they plan to be true. On the other hand, it was his daughter going off alone with a boy. It was a difficult decision. Sending his daughter would be both a diplomatic mission and a chance to observe them. "I see how it could work. How will your people react to a woman ambassador?"

Hiccup leaned back in his chair. "Same as they would if Merida was a

man. So, long as it looks like she could hold her own, it's fine."

Elinor's eyes met her husband's. They held a silent argument over this choice. "Fine. But know that I think that this is an inappropriate and terrible idea." With that statement, Elinor marched up to the hers and the king's chamber.

"She'll come around," said Fergus almost wistfully.

Merida stood up and made for the stairs with an excited face. "I'm going to go pack a bag!"

"Pack light. Only the essentials. And pack warm. Your bow counts as an essential," called Hiccup after her.

Fergus herded his boys up to bed at the same time but held an arm across Hiccup's chest to stop him so they could talk. "Hiccup. I'm charging you with my daughter's safety. If anything happens to her it's on you. Do I make myself clear?"

"As a sunny day."

"Good."

AN: That is a wrap. Fecal matter has gotten real. Up next is Chapter 11: [Go Awry](#).

Review and let me know what you think of the story so far.

War and Peace,

[RedHoodandtheOutlaws](#)

11. Chapter 11

AN: I am so sorry this is late. In a month I have gotten a job, quit that job, got a new job, went to my brother's college graduation/going away party, and had writers block. I apologize. I went from fry cook at Wendy's to Overnight Janitor for Walmart. So I'm going to have more time to write.

Ladies and Gentlemen, it is my pleasure to give you chapter eleven of this story. Chapter 12 is underway and will be posted as soon as it is done. I warn you: Due to the literal mountain between my beta, this is unbeta'd. Please excuse the grammar issues as she is not here to lovingly correct the chapter.

Not much else to say. Please direct all questions to my inbox. Review and tell your internet friends.

And here we go.

I own nothing.

OF BOWS AND DRAGONS

**Chapter 11: [Go Awry](#) **

. "Hiccup. I'm charging you with my daughter's safety. If anything happens to her it's on you. Do I make myself clear?"

"_As a sunny day."_

"_Good."_

--the next morning--

Merida woke up early the next morning. The early autumn sun filtered in from her windows and splashed across her face. She quickly half tamed her mane of fiery hair and finished dressing for the day. Once she felt she was presentable, she grabbed her bag she had packed the night before, as well as her bow and quiver, and headed down to the Grand Hall.

In the hall she found a fully saddled and packed Toothless sanding by the table. Hiccup was kneeling next to the dragon's rear leg and was working on the saddle. He yanked hard on the strap that was newly attached to the saddle and stood up to inspect his work. He was dressed as she had first met him. Weapons covered his body and he looked ready to travel. "What're you doin'?" asked Merida as she walked over to him.

Hiccup hadn't heard her approach and gave a startled yelp whilst turning to face her. Each hand was on a dagger, ready to draw. He relaxed quickly once he realized it was Merida. "Oh! Sorry. You startled me. These are stirrups so you don't fall off while we're flying," said Hiccup gesturing to the straps.

"Good! We wouldn't want that now would we?"

Hiccup smiled and took her bag from her hand and tied it securely to the rear of the saddle.

It was at this point that the rest of the Merida's family came down the stairs. "Morning you too! You all packed?" asked Fergus. He was the only one who looked able or willing to speak. The triplets were tripping over their own feet in a sleepy stupor and Elinor still looked mightily unhappy that her daughter was leaving on the mission.

Hiccup nodded. "Yep. Thank you for the food and other supplies."

"Of course."

The meal was passed in general silence. The two foreigners were eating heavily as they had traveled this route before and knew the stresses of hunger. Merida tried to follow their lead. She would have liked to talk to her family for a last time before she left but it seemed Hiccup was anxious to leave. Before too long the food had been consumed.

Hiccup stood and checked the knots on the saddle. He tightened the knots on the bulbous bags of food that the King had given them. "We need to go if we're gonna make head way." He climbed on to the leather saddle and held out a hand for Merida to use as a boost up onto toothless. She took his hand tightly and her crystal blue eyes met his forest green. Between them passed a silent understanding with this grasp. _'I'll watch your back.' _

He pulled her up in a swift motion and she sat roughly in on the back of the saddle. Fergus smiled sadly. He didn't particularly want to send his daughter but he knew better than to try and stop her in a situation such as this. "We'll walk you to the door. I'll fill the rest of the kingdom in on our agreement. You might want to fill in Merida," he whispered into Hiccup's ear.

Hiccup nodded and set his helmet on his head. "It'll take a bit longer than I'd estimated last night. Given the weight of our supplies and the both of usâ€¦ I don't know how long till we get back with the majority of the village. A month at most. Can't be sure."

Fergus nodded slowly and stepped out of the way for the dragon and his passengers to pass. Elinor intercepted them though before they made it two steps. "Promise me you'll keep her safe. Promise me I'll get to see my daughter again."

"I can't do that. This trip is a long one. Plenty of time for something to go wrong."

Elinor stepped closer. "I don't care."

Hiccup sighed. "I swear, I'll do my best."

She nodded despite the fear in her eyes and stepped out of the way. Merida smiled at her mother. While she would never publically admit it, she liked that her mother was protective of her. Before them, the castle doors opened. Butterflies bloomed into her midsection as they exited her home. She had never been one to leave the land of her people but, now she was leaving it on the back of a dragon.

In the courtyard, the all but one member of the court assembled along perimeter. Nathair was missing and nobody seemed to care. Durall was looking quite pleased with the arrangement his king had reached and offered the smile to the pair seated on the black beast. Merida returned it while Hiccup seemed anxious to get off the ground.

Hiccup leaned forward and scratched Toothless' ear. "You ready buddy?" Toothless nodded and set his legs for takeoff. "Last chance to back out, Princess," said Hiccup obviously smiling beneath his helmet.

"Not on your life."

Hiccup nodded and gripped the handles on the saddle. "Then hold on. Toothless: Let's ride!"

The crowd gasped as the trio lifted into the air. For them it was the first time they had seen a human fly and it was breath taking. However, what those on the ground felt was insignificant to what Merida felt as they spiraled up. She gripped tight around Hiccup's midsection as the comforting solid ground was left far below. The air blew through her hair and it was exhilarating yet frightening. Soon they flew off toward the northern borders of the kingdom and beyond. Neither of them aware of the storms brewing on all fronts.

__-Meanwhile elsewhere in the Castle-__

Nathair was not missed at the princess' send off. He wasn't well liked by many in the kingdom and was loved by fewer still. He had been made an advisor because he was a shrewd diplomat and was needed when Fergus first took the throne. The only reason he had not been removed was there was no suitable replacement for him. Those who had attended should have sent for him.

He was busy at his desk trying desperately to save the plans he had made over the last two years. It had taken all of his skills as a diplomat to convince the right people to fall into place. If he had succeeded he would have ascended to the seat of the king. Now it was a ruined by a crippled Viking, no older than a boy.

He smiled in wondrous realization that he could still salvage his plan. Moving up his plans would be the only answer. He drafted a letter quickly explaining what had happened and giving his best instructions. Sealing the letter, he tied it to the raven he kept in a hidden cage in his chambers. Soon the obsidian bird was out the window headed south.

__-With the traveling heroes-__

Merida, Hiccup, and Toothless had a week of travel behind them. In that time they had avoided all of the dangers that faced them. Making camp had been a tenuous affair. The temperature had dropped quickly after the second night and it required the two humans to use the same wing of Toothless to remain warm. It had resulted in many blushes from both of them as they woke up with no personal space to speak of. By the fifth night, however, the temperature was cold enough to make them shove any embarrassment out of mind.

Hiccup woke up early the seventh morning. He removed himself from beneath Toothless' left wing, careful not to wake the sleeping princess or the dragon. He stepped into the freezing cold and instantly missed the warmth of his traveling companions. Admittedly he was doing to keep her warm. He was bred to face this type of climate.

He removed the food bag from the nearby tree and began to remove the portion for that day. The food that Fergus had given them had lasted quite a while. Half of it still remained. On top of that with the present time they would reach Berk in maybe four or five days. That was nearly as fast as the estimate Hiccup had given for only him. In order to maintain pace he quickly packed the camp.

This last stretch of the trip would be the most dangerous. They had passed into the south most territory of the Viking tribes that laid siege to Berk a couple of years earlier. The memory of the Black Rider was fresh and it was all the more necessary to stay farther from the tribes. He hadn't even allowed a fire the night before. Merida was angered by that and started shouting when Toothless had tackled them. The noise had brought the suspicion of the local tribe and they had begun searching the woods nearby.

Hiccup walked to the sleeping pair and knelt down next to the black wing. "Toothless. Merida. Time to get moving," he whispered. He didn't dare use a voice louder than that. After a few moments of silence and deep breathing he tried again. "If you don't get up now,

there is no breakfast for either of you."

Sluggish bodies began moving. Toothless sat up and moved to the creek a few yards away to catch his breakfast. Merida on the other hand slowly shifted into a sitting position and shivered from the missing warmth. "H-how ar-are you s-s-s-so warm?"

Hiccup chuckled quietly and handed her a piece of dried meat and a blanket. "It was the coldest winter in ten generations when I was born."

Merida gladly accepted both the warmth and the food. "Fair enough, lad." Merida ripped a chunk of meat from her breakfast and savored the salty taste. "So, you never did tell me what you and my father agreed to."

Hiccup grimaced and put his half eaten food away. "I don't think it's a good idea. They aren't exactly quiet topics."

"I'll be quite quiet," replied Merida.

The young chief rubbed his face and sighed. "Fine. My village gets a tract of land about a day's walk from the castle. In return we have to hold up some general agreements."

"Such as?" prodded the princess.

"Well, assistance in battle, expansion of trade, and allowing the kingdom of DunBroch to train with dragons, mainly."

Merida raised a brow. "Trading?"

"There is a tribe of Vikings dedicated to trading. They remain neutral and as far south as the great deserts far to the south. Not to mention Berk's own crafts," explained Hiccup quietly.

"You said mainly, what else?"

Hiccup winced. "That is the part that you won't like." The princess narrowed her eyes at her friend. "The clans are pressuring your dad into holding games for your hand and he wants Berk to compete. He wants me to compete."

Unsurprisingly, Merida did not take this news well. "DAMN THEM! DAMN HIM! DAMN YOU! I AM NOT SOME PRIZE TO BE WO-" Merida's aggravated rant was cut off by a gloved hand covering her mouth.

"By the hammer! You need to be quiet! Don't you remember last night?" whispered Hiccup urgently.

She shoved the hand away. "Don't tell me to calm down!"

All sense of voice control was lost and it was going to end badly. In the distance there was been shouting and it sounded like it was quickly getting closer.

Hiccup snatched up his bags and his helmet. He reached out to Merida to take her hand. "It's the scouting party from last night. We need to move now!"

****AN:** That is a wrap. Fecal matter has gotten real and hit the fan. Up next is Chapter 12: Merida Pays a Debt in Full. Merida is going to be paying debt next chapter. To whom? How? You'll have to find out.

****Review and let me know what you think of the story so far.****

****War and Peace,****

****RedHoodandtheOutlaws****

12. Chapter 12

****AN:** This chapter is also un'betaed. It's not that I'm far from my unofficial beta, it's that she would rather watch ****_**Robocop**_**** with me. She wins. Every time. So here is Chapter 12.

****!***WARNING***!** This Chapter contains some graphic material not suitable for some readers. This includes: Graphic depictions of blood.

****Not much else to say. Please direct all questions to my inbox. Review and tell your internet friends.****

****And here we go.****

****I own nothing.****

****OF BOWS AND DRAGONS****

****Chapter 12: A Debt Paid in Full ****

Merida ripped her hand out of his and marched to the earnestly waiting dragon. Hiccup rolled his eyes and hastily lashed the bags to his friend. After climbing on he pulled the angry Scot on the saddle behind him. "Look, princess, I won't apologize for trying to help my people. You can hate me later. Now we need to move!"

Toothless took off and started heading to the next island. Merida looked down just in time to see eight large Vikings, armed with bows and swords, emerge from the tree line. Quickly, the warriors nocked arrows and began firing. Of the eight arrows, three hit their targets. The first three arrows skewered the bag that had been just lashed to the saddle and scratched at Toothless' hide. The bag split and the food went flying. The next two pierced Hiccup's greaves on his left leg. They sank into his leg to the fletching and into Toothless' flank.

Both rider and dragon gave pained yells and roars, respectively. The pain was searing and agonizing. Blood poured steadily from the punctures on his leg. It took a few moments before it hit them. Hiccup felt his vision blur and it felt like pressure was building on the wounds. Hiccup only managed to say a single word before his chest began to tighten. "Poisonâ€¦!"

And with that they began to plummet downwards.

__Line break__

It was late at night before Hiccup regained consciousness. He opened his eyes and took a deep breath in. Blood was heavy in the air causing him to bolt upright. His head pounded in protest. Gripping his head he felt a cloth bandage with a wet mark. His left leg was wrapped tightly and had evidence of bleeding.

Once the pain subsided, Hiccup took some notice of what was going on around him. They were in a seaside cave. He had been using rock as a pillow and he was facing a small fire that was less than three feet away. Off to the side laid Toothless who had what looked like a green dress wrapped around his midsection. The black dragon was unsaddled and awake but he looked like he was improving quickly.

On the other side of the fire sat Merida. Her thick woolen dress was torn in several places and she had a bloody bandage wrapped around her upper arm. Her bow was sitting firmly in her left hand and she had an arrow sitting on the string ready to fire. An unfamiliar and bloody sword was leaning against a rock nearby. With all the blood in the cave, the smell of blood was unsurprising.

She looked attractive here in a strange sort of way. It was a large difference from the princess he found in the forest. The scene reminded him of words his father told him years ago, back when he and Astrid broke up. _'Don't look for a Princess in need of saving. Search for a Queen who will fight by your side.' _The old saying resonated within him as he beheld the sight. _"Unfortunately she isn't exactly fond of me right now. We probably should have discussed the terms earlier," _thought Hiccup.

Hiccup tried to pull himself into a standing position, grunting with exertion as he did so. Merida didn't even flinch. He stood and felt his torso constricted by his breast plate and moved to strip his torso of the leather and plates.

Toothless watched as his human forced himself into standing position and began peeling off his armor. It was funny how humans were so breakable, yet resilient. The dragon yawned. His body went into a coma to burn off the poison. Another day and he'd be able to walk around. Currently he could hardly move and he was a terrifying murder-beast. Yet, the fragile man who got dosed with the same stuff, was able to force himself to move.

Hiccup limped over to the princess keeping guard, who he suspected had fallen asleep. He managed to reach her rock and sat on the adjacent one. "Merida?" he asked tentatively. When he got no answer, he gently shook her shoulder.

Merida jerked awake and instinctively prepared to fire an arrow at the thing that startled her. It took a moment for her to realize it was only Hiccup. "Oh. It's just you." Her voice was far from the determined and upbeat one she carried usually. It was now quiet and tired. She turned back to the cave entrance and released the tension in her bow.

Hiccup gave her small grimace and rubbed his head. "What happened? All I remember is getting hit and we started to fall."

Merida sighed and spoke in a tired monotone, "I had a debt to pay." Hiccup gave her a confused look. "We started to

fall..."

__-Flashback-__

"Poison?! What do you mean poison?" They were falling towards the island just across a narrow stretch of water from the last island they landed on. Merida was terrified. Toothless had started to go slack and they stopped flying as fast. The dragon flew like he was drunk toward the ground. _

The princess was thankful for the controlled fall. Or she would be if she wasn't screaming. Hiccup had gone all but boneless. He was struggling to get control of the fall and failing miserably. As they reached impact, Hiccup ripped his helmet off and slammed it on Merida's head. Not two seconds later the trio impacted into a gravel beach. Merida was thrown clear and slid on the ground with her thick dress and Hiccups helmet protecting her._

She stood up and brushed herself off. The helmet came off next and was tossed onto the ground. Merida was in shock over the state of Toothless and Hiccup. The human was pinned beneath his dragon and was bleeding from the gash on his temple. The arrows had been pulled free from the dragon's side and the wounds bled freely. The Viking was unconscious while his dragon was struggling to remain awake. He moved off of his companion and looked into Merida's eyes. 'Help.' She could almost hear the cry in her head. The scot quickly closed the distance between them and checked the pulse on Hiccups neck. A faint, slow, but steady heart rate pulsed through him. _

Toothless nudged his head against her shoulder and sluggishly gestured towards a sea side cave. The dragon stumbled into the cave while the princess dragged Hiccup behind her. After laying him down she quickly left the cave to grab any supplies off of the beach before the scouting party came looking. All the food had been lost but, Merida's bag, and Hiccup's supplies survived. _

Inside the cave, Merida pulled the medical supplies from Hiccups bag and began to dress his wounds. The gash on his head was jagged and bleeding heavily but it was a simple fix. The arrows in his leg were more difficult to deal with. She was broke the arrow heads and pulled the shafts out with gut twisting squelch. _

Blood flowed steadily out of the holes through his leg. Merida took the long bandage and tightly wrapped the leg. Gathering dry driftwood near Hiccup, Merida lit a fire to help Hiccup sweat the poison out. Then she turned to treat the dragon unconscious in the cornerâ€|_

__-End Flashback-__

"â€|there weren't any bandages to use on Toothless so I used my spare dress," she whispered quietly to her companion.

Hiccup nodded and rubbed his head. "Wellâ€| thanks." He looked out to the cave entrance where there were abnormal shapes in the darkness and then down at the bloody short sword he was leaning near. "What happened to the scouting party?"

The princess shuddered with a silent cry. She gave no verbal answer but pointed at the shapes at the mouth ahead of them.

Hiccup followed the finger and felt his stomach drop. He had hoped she didn't have to do this act. "What happened?"

Merida wiped her face and took a shaky breath. "They found us not long after I patched you both up. Iâ€¦ killed them. Five of them fell to my arrows. I took a swordâ€¦ andâ€¦ Iâ€¦" Merida turned fully into the light revealing the blood streaking her pale skin. "I watched the light fade from their eyes."

The young Viking sighed heavily and pulled the crying woman into an embrace. "I know it hurts. I know. It's gonna hurt for a long time, but every day it will hurt less. You didn't do anything wrong. What you did saved lives." He pulled back and looked her in the eye. "Go get some sleep. I'll take watch."

The young Scot nodded slowly. "Thank you, Hiccup."

"Anytime, Princess." Hiccup took up his post with Merida's bow at the ready. He didn't think any other of the scouting party's tribesmen would come looking for them this far out. They'll assume that they died on the island and not on the neighboring one. As long as they could leave in the next couple of days they should be fine.

He leaned heavily against the rock. Merida's reaction to killing isn't all that uncommon. Most of his peers, including him, had the same reaction during the war. By the end, they had all been calloused for better or worse.

The night passed without incident proving Hiccup's theory right. At first light, he limped to the cave entrance. The bodies of the eight men were laying pale and stiff on the rocky ground several yards away. The blood around them was disturbed showing it was obvious that that creatures had come in the night to feed on the bodies.

Arrows looked as though they had sprouted like seedlings from the five who were felled by arrows. Hiccup noted that every shot was expertly placed in the heart. Despite the grim surroundings he could help but appreciate the marksmanship under pressure. The other three were closer to the mouth of the cave. One of them had been slashed across the stomach and spilled his entrails. It appeared that the man had been trying in vain to return his organs to their natural positions when he was killed by a merciful stab to chest. His sword was missing from its scabbard and wasn't laying nearby. _The first of the three to be injured, the last to die. Must be his sword in the cave,_ Hiccup thought. Another had a slice across his throat. His hand showed signs of trying to stop the bleeding. He obviously hadn't suffered long. _His blood must have been what is all over Merida. _The final man had been disarmed, literally. His right hand still grasped his sword and it laid not from the wrist it came from. The killing blow had been a slice from his left hip to his right shoulder.

Despite her age and her status as a princess, Hiccup had to admit that Merida was an excellent swordsman.

Hiccup quickly got to work stripping weapons and other supplies from the bodies of the dead. It took twice as long as it should have due to his injured leg. Once the weapons were stacked by the cave, he set to work moving the bodies. The small boat they had arrived in was

sitting in on the shore where it had been deposited by high tide. It took nearly an hour to drag the bodies into the boat. Once it was loaded and oiled he put it out to sea and fired a flaming arrow. Once the boat was lit, he limped back to the cave.

Merida's debt to me, he thought. _Paid in full._

****AN: That is a wrap. Merida has done things. Bloody things.

****Next Chapter 13: Riders on the Storm.****

****Review and let us know what you think of the story so far.****

****War and Peace,****

****RedHoodandtheOutlaws****

13. Chapter 13

****AN: A new chapter for you guys. It is hot out of the oven and ready to be read. I'm glad to see you all are enjoying the story so far. Please review as it gives me further motivation.****

****This chapter is also not beta'd. ****

****In the meantime, enjoy the show.****

****Not much else to say. Please direct all questions to my inbox. Review and tell your internet friends.****

****And here we go.****

****I own nothing.****

****OF BOWS AND DRAGONS****

****Chapter 13: Riders on the Storm ****

Merida woke up with a start to a new burning smell. Her dreams were full of the faces of her recent kills and brimstone. The smell in her waking hours gave her chills. She was comforted and frightened by the fact she was still in the cave from the night before. The fire before her was nearly burned out making the scent she detected coming from outside the cave area.

A shuffling noise from the gravel outside the cave had her scrambling for her bow which was nowhere to be found. Neither was Hiccup. On instinct, Merida drew a dagger from Hiccup's discarded armor and took a defensive stance. Despite the events of yesterday she was prepared to fight.

Hiccup rounded the corner into the seaside cave to see Merida up and ready to fight. "I know I haven't been the best of hosts, but this is just ridiculous," he remarked weakly. Merida released the breath she had been holding and sat back onto the ground after being handed her bow and quiver. "How are you feeling?

Merida shrugged her shoulders. "I'm fine."

"No you're not. I know that look. From experience." He sat down across the fire from her. "You're burning up inside and both of us know it."

"How would you know?" Venom filled her voice. She wanted nothing more than to talk about something else.

"I was fifteen at the time. Almost sixteen. Our village was attacked. Itâ€¦ it started a war." Hiccup rubbed his chin. "I know exactly what you're going through princess."

"So?"

Hiccup took the dagger from Merida and set the blade in the fire with the handle sticking out. "You'll need to talk about it. I'm just saying if, when, you need to talk I'm here. Don't hold it in."

She gave the young man a small smile, then eagerly changed the topic. "What are you up to with that dagger?"

The Chief of Berk grimaced. "The bleeding still hasn't stopped fully. I have to sew them shutâ€¦. Or cauterize the wounds."

"That sounds unpleasant."

"It will be. Why don't you find us some food? You're the only one in any shape to do so." Merida nodded and strapped on her quiver and prepared to leave. "Stay out of sight. The Viking tribe is around the far end of the island but it doesn't mean they don't wander away from it."

Once he was sure the princess was far enough away from the cave, Hiccup prepared to seal his wounds. There wasn't anything he could use as a suture in his bags. This left him with the option to cauterize. _Lovely. Good thing I started heating the dagger, _he thought dryly. He set to work undressing his wounds. The dragon on the far side of the cave lazily glanced at the sight. He wished he could help but in his current state he'd do more harm than good. Toothless would end up destroying Hiccup rather than helping him.

Hiccup gagged himself and tried to gather his resolve. Taking the hot iron from the fire, he pressed it into the first two of the four holes his leg. The interior of the thigh is a sensitive area. Pressing a red-hot dagger into it is nothing short of pure agony. It took twenty seconds to sufficiently seal the wounds on the interior of the leg shut. The gag muffled his screams. Sweat poured from his brow and tears leaked from his eyes. His breaths came in short bursts. He put the knife back into the fire and he leaned back against the rock.

Toothless gave his human a huff of anger and sympathy. He hated seeing Hiccup in pain. Struggling to his feet, the dragon stumbled over to his friend and laid down by his side. The young human gave a nod of thanks to his partner and moved to do the less sensitive side of the thigh. He took a deep breath. Then, without hesitation he pressed the dagger into his flesh.

--With Merida--

Not far into the interior of the island, Merida was tracking rabbits through underbrush. It was a slow moving trek through the harsh terrain made dangerous by the threat of more Vikings. She would have argued to stay in the cave and help Hiccup but her hunger was growing steadily. _Not to mention the storm on the horizon, _she thought to herself as she watched the storm cloud rumble towards her.

The tracks of the rabbits were converging on a single location. The warren. Hopefully enough meat for all three of them laid inside. It took nearly an hour to set up the trap that would draw the small creatures from their home. The appetizing greenery was hanging directly in front of the opening and she sat in the shadows with her bow ready. She had several arrows ready and lined up and ready to fire.

It didn't take long for the bait to draw attention. In a few minutes, four rabbits of healthy size emerged and began to nibble on the delicious morsels. Merida took careful aim prepared to fire. She felt sweats breakout on her hands and brow. The images from the day before flashed through her mind as her arm began to shake. All she could think of was the blood showering onto her face.

She slowly released the tension in the bow and sat back. Her head rested on her knee as she cried silently. Through all of the tears and despair, a single picture shone her mind. It was of a one legged man and his dragon bleeding in a cave. Taking a deep breath, she cleared her head and picked up the bow again. _People are counting on you. Those rabbit will save a village_. Quickly, she fired four arrows and killed all four of the rabbits.

Grabbing the game she ignored the blood and rushed back to the cave. She hoped to reach the cave before the storm raised hell on the island.

The trek back was downhill and much easier. She slid into the cave in time for the heavens to open and unleash a storm of celestial proportion. Before her was a bit of a sight. Hiccup lay against his dragon, both of them fast asleep. Hiccup's leg was propped up and re-banded in a clean, bandage. The fire which had started to die out when she had left was steadily burning and near it was a pile of dry wood. In the pot from the supply bag was full of what looked like fresh water. Hiccup had been busy.

Merida decided to set to work cleaning and cooking her trophies from her hunt. I didn't take long. She may be a princess but she had spent her fair share of time with her father after a hunt. With practiced hands, she made quick work of them and set to cooking.

The smell of cooking meat woke Hiccup from his usual nightmares. It was a pleasant scent to wake up to, given their current situation.

"Good evening, lad. Pleasant dreams?" asked Merida looking up from her cooking.

"Uh, not usually, no." Hiccup sat up and rubbed the bandage on his head. "So, I take it that the hunting trip went well?"

"No, I decided use my mystic powers to create rabbit out of thin

air."

Hiccup put his hands up in defense. "Whoa, so sassy."

That evening's chef rolled her eyes. "Well, if that's how you feel there will be more rabbit for me and Toothless."

"Awwww, and here I thought our relationship called for more humor."

"Relationship? Ain't that moving a bit fast there, lad? I haven't even seen your village yet," said Merida slyly with a raised eyebrow.

Hiccup's face flushed crimson. "I- uhâ€¦ uhâ€¦ I- I didn'tâ€¦ mean-" The fearless Viking warrior's stammering was cut off by hearty laughter from his female companion. "You like to mess with my head, don't you?"

"It is an easy source of entertainment," said Merida with a massive smirk on her face. The smirk fell shortly after and her eyes fell onto the bandages on her friend's leg. "Look, Hiccup. I'm sorry that my reaction got you and Toothless hurt."

"Don't worry about it. We're Vikings. It's an occupational hazard." Hiccup flashed her a smile. "Besides I probably could've picked a better time and to let you know." Merida nodded glumly. "It doesn't matter anyway, that term only applied if you gave your permission. Berk will not be participating in the games."

Merida stared in shock. That was not what she had expected at all. All that did was increase her guilt. She shook her head to clear it, eager to change the subject. "So when can we get off this island?"

Hiccup scratched Toothless' chin. "A few days. Minimum. Toothless is in no shape to fly right now. Not to this storm. We aren't leaving anytime soon."

__-__Two Days Later, Off the Coast__-__

The storm had been raging for two days, following the small ship from its dock. The ship rocked up and down and pitched side to side as the waves battered the boat. This had been the constant motion for the day and a half they'd been at sea. The trip would have gone quicker had the storm not been battering them.

The occupants had been sent to find out what had happened to the black dragon and his rider that had been reportedly shot down. The trading ships had been passing by and when they saw what happened they made a bee-line for the village. After all, how many villages had an infamous rider of a black dragon?

These riders of Berk and their dragons were sent immediately as the news reached Valka's ears. There were three pairs sent with the boat: Astrid Hofferson and her deadly nadder, Stormfly, Snotlout Jorgenson and his monstrous nitghmare, Hookfang, and finally Fishlegs Ingerman and his gronkle, Meatlug. They hadn't needed to be appointed to go on this mission. All three had volunteered. Valka's missive was clear, "Bring **me** my son. Bring **us** our salvation."

Currently the dragons had been sent below deck to get them out of the rain and have them dry in case they needed fire. Astrid stood at the bow with her hood up, looking out for obstacles and their target: the Isle of Bjorn. If Hiccup was returning with news of a place that could actually support the village, they needed to find him. Meanwhile, Fishlegs controlled the sails and Snotlout guided the rudder. If they all hadn't been trained as sailors since they could walk, this would be difficult work. Still, if they could find land soon then everyone would appreciate the break.

"Astrid!" yelled Snotlout over the storm. "Any sign of land yet?!"

Astrid started to turn to tell the young man that there was no sign yet. However, before she could turn fully, she spied a glow to her right. It was almost invisible with the storm raging around her.

"ASTRID! Do you see anything?!"

Astrid pointed at the glow. "Starboard! Over there!"

Snotlout nodded and steered the rudder into the direction of his friend's finger. "Fishlegs! Tighten up the sails! We don't need to smash on the rocks!"

**AN: Rescue in the form of dragon riders is just a beach landing away. **

Next Chapter 14: Homecoming.

Review and let us know what you think of the story so far.

War and Peace,

RedHoodandtheOutlaws

14. Chapter 14

AN: A new chapter for you guys. It is hot out of the oven and ready to be read. I'm glad to see you all are enjoying the story so far. Please review as it gives me further motivation. I am very sorry for the delay. I was trying hard to balance school starting up, moving over a mountain to a house, and working nine hour overnight shifts. I'm better now. I have a new job. And you have a new chapter.

**This chapter is also not beta'd. **

In the meantime, enjoy the show.

Not much else to say. Please direct all questions to my inbox. Review and tell your internet friends.

And here we go.

I own nothing.

****OF BOWS AND DRAGONS****

****Chapter 14: Homecoming****

_Astrid started to turn to tell the young man that there was no sign yet. However, before she could turn fully, she spied a glow to her right. It was almost invisible with the storm raging around her.

_

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__-__Inside the Cave- __-

At first, Merida thought it was the lightning and thunder that had woken it up that night. After all, she had been sleeping peacefully with no ill dreams finding her. It was only a few moments until she realized what had woken her. Hiccup's iron foot nudged her leg again. He was twitching quietly next to his dragon. The dragon in question was looking at his human with eyes of concern.

Merida moved to wake him only for Toothless to grunt and shake his head. The princess moved to awaken her friend despite the black beast's insistence otherwise. The moment her hand reached his arm, Hiccup moved. His left hand grabbed her wrist and twisted it behind her while, his right hand drew a dagger and set it against her neck.

Coming to his senses, Hiccup released her arm and removed the knife from her neck. "Sorry. Reflex."

Merida exhaled slowly. "It- its fine." Hiccup smiled and rubbed both his left side and thigh. The recent injuries to his person were aching in this storm. "Storm's makin' your body act up-"

"Quiet!" interrupted Hiccup. He snatched up the bow and quiver and tossed it to Merida. The Viking tapped his ear and pointed to the storm outside. Merida strained to listen. Then she heard it. Movement on the gravel outside. She heard a few thumps into the shore then shuffling towards the entrance.

Hiccup got her attention. He held up three fingers and pointed out towards the sound. Both of them took positions ready to defend their shelter. Toothless moved back sluggishly to the back of the cave as to get out of the way, while Hiccup took up the position just next the opening. Meanwhile, Merida prepared her bow behind a boulder and aimed it at the entrance.

The crunching of gravel slowly became easily audible over the raging storm. Merida and Hiccup waited in tense silence for the inevitable conflict looming in the shadows of the storm outside. The sound of movement halted and was replaced by a yelling voice that was difficult to hear over the storm. The feminine voice was firm and spoke only a few words.

"Hiccup! Are you there?" It was unexpected to hear that in the middle of a rainstorm. Hiccup at least seemed to recognize the voice and the tension in his stance seemed to bleed from his shoulders. His defensive stance didn't change but he slowly sheathed his drawn weapons. Merida followed his lead and relaxed the tension in her bow and made to sheath her arrow. Upon seeing this, the young chief shook his head at her and mouthed, 'Not yet.' The princess raised both her brow and her bow. The iron tip of the arrow glinted dangerously in the firelight.

Hiccup forced himself out of his stance and straightened himself to a standing position. He used a deep breath to bury his searing pain behind a well-practiced mask. "That depends. Are you friendly? 'Cause if you're not friendly, I'm not gonna let you in," he called back to the voice in the darkness.

There was a series of snots from the direction of the voice. "Dammit Hiccup, it's Astrid, Fishlegs, and Snotlout. We're wet and we're coming in."

The gravel shuffled quickly and loudly and ended only after three bodies entered into the light of the fire. The young woman in front was about Merida's height with parted and braided blond hair and a thin face. She wore a fur hood attached to slightly oversized metal pauldrons, a crimson shirt, fur gauntlets and boots, and a leather skirt over blue leg wraps. In her belt she wore a large double sided axe. The boy behind her was shorter than the girl and possessed a stock build with broad shoulders and a massive chin with light stubble. He wore a leather tunic tucked into his pants, a horned helmet, and spiked bracers. Around his shoulders was a fur shawl that connected to a fur vest. He carried a large spiked club. The last boy was tall, wide, and built like a brick house. His mid-length blond hair kept under a winged steel cap. He was covered head to toe in fur and had a belt of pockets wrapped around his wide middle. In the belt he carried several wide bladed daggers.

At the sight of the rough looking trio, Hiccup waved Merida's bow down. "Merida, I'd like to introduce you to Astrid, Snotlout, and Fishlegs. Guys, this is Merida. She's my friend." As he spoke his façade cracked open and he staggered into the cave wall. "What the hell are you three doing here?"

"First, you need to sit down before you fall down." Hiccup moved to protest but Astrid stepped quickly and caught her friend and moved to set him onto the ground by the fire and stood back to scan the room.

Toothless was lying lazily in the corner with a dress wrapped around his middle like a bandage. This 'Merida' character moved closer to Hiccup almost as soon as Astrid set him down. Her Flame colored hair was matted and her dress had clearly seen better days. There was under the all the dirt and grime an air of refinement that spoke of privilege, not the harsh life of a Viking. Not suspicious at all. Snotlout and Fishlegs sat on either side of the pair while Astrid herself sat across from them.

The largest Viking opened one of his belt pocket and pulled out some fish jerky which he handed to all of the assembly. "Valka sent us. The trade ships were passing when they saw a black dragon with a rider get shot down," explained Fishlegs.

"So, as usual, we had to come save you," remarked Snotlout as he reclined. "Just an average week, really."

Hiccup rolled his eyes. "Fair enough. Thanks all the same. Ass." He grabbed the water skin and took a drink then passed it on. "How's the village?"

Astrid took the skin from Fishlegs and drank deeply. "Surviving currently. We're tired, dirty, and hungry. I hope your adventure was worth it."

Hiccup nodded his head and said, "I've struck a deal for the movement of the entire tribe." His eyes flicked over to his traveling companion. "The King of DunBroch has offered us asylum." The looks of shock spread across his friends' faces.

Fishlegs rubbed the back of his head nervously. "Look Hiccup, I know you're chief and all but the Scots aren't friendly to us Vikings."

"I spoke to almost every tribe in the archipelago. They are all either afraid of us or they want our heads on pikes. DunBroch is offering us independent rule on our own land." He tapped the saddle bag behind him. "He and I worked out a fair treaty. I just need the Elder's approval."

Astrid shook her head. "We trust you. We're just concerned. Now how the hell did you get such a deal?"

Hiccup tilted his head towards Merida. "Why would their king grant sanctuary for saving the life of one girl?" asked Snotlout incredulously.

"Because I am Princess Merida of DunBroch," replied Merida in a matter-a-fact tone of voice.

"Oh."

Astrid rolled her eyes. "'Of course she is. But a pampered brat has no business associating with a Viking. Let alone the chief of the tribe.'"

Hiccup explained how he and Toothless came to be in DunBroch and found Merida in the river. They described everything that transpired over the few days that he and his dragon were in country as well as the contents of the treaty. "On the way back to Berk, we were shot down and Merida managed to save both me and Toothless. She treated our wounds and sweated the poison out of me, then she— took care of the Viking scouting party that attacked us."

The other Vikings sharing their fires warmth, understood the meaning behind Hiccup's statement and looked at the fire headed princess in a new light, reshuffling their low opinions of her. Merida sat sheepish under the gazes of the alien three. She felt conflicted. The deaths of the eight men weighed heavily on her mind but these new Vikings seemed to actually be happy.

Fishlegs stretched his back and yawned loudly. "We came ship due to the storm. Flying would have played hell on the dragon wings." The

large man gestured to the sleeping dragon in the corner of the cave. "Looks like it will get us back to Berk easier with Tootless down for the count."

Hiccup nodded, "Maybe our luck is starting to change."

They left for Berk early the next morning. They were packed and boarded on the ship before the sun had risen too far above the horizon, much to Merida's chagrin. After quick thanks to Thor for clearing the storm from their path, they got underway.

The trip was rather exciting for all of the humans on board. For the Vikings hope permeated their beings as they returned to Berk for what could be the last time. Within each of them however, was fear of what was to come as well. Hiccup would never admit it but he was also excited to show his friend where he had grown up. The lone Scot was brimming with excitement over seeing new lands, with friendly people, and meeting more dragons.

The dragon passengers were quite curious about the strange smelling human. She was new and different. All three of the unfamiliar dragons and mostly recovered Toothless greatly enjoyed her company. She smelled similar to a fresh and distant forests mixed gently with the scent of Hiccup. When Stormfly, Meatlug, and Hookfang confronted Toothless over this he merely communicated that there might be some mutual consideration of what the humans called 'courting but refused to speak further.

The ship traveled quickly over the open sea overnight and brought Berk into sight by late morning the next day. Merida was shocked at what broke from the chilled sea and haunting mist. Massive carved stone sentinels in the form a Vikings which held flames in their mouths. Most of them were damaged and several were decimated completely. Soon the island itself came out the mist making it clear that Hiccup had not exaggerated. The earth was scorched and blacked. To say vegetation was sparse would be an understatement. There were foundations that were evidence of buildings burned to cinders or taken repurposed into ships if the floating shames at the port were anything to go by.

The sound of mismatched steps came behind Merida and broke her shock. "Princess Merida, Welcome to the illustrious Isle of Berk."

AN: The odyssey of the Viking people is some to be soothed.

Next Chapter 15: A Parting of Ways.

Review and let us know what you think of the story so far.

War and Peace,

~RedHoodandtheOutlaws

15. Chapter 15

**AN: **

**This chapter is also not beta'd. Pretty much the rest will be so as

my beta has quit. **

I AM SO SORRY for the time it took to release this. I have excuses that I'm sure you don't care about. Mainly, I actually do most of my writing in the margins of my notes and then type them up later. This whole chapter and the one after were written back in November but, I lost the paper. Also, I am a very slow typer.

Finally, over last semester I read some absolutely stunning fanfics. If you like Star Wars I recommend you head on over to read Blank101's stuff. All of them are glorious. They moved me to tears at a couple of points. If Avatar: the Last Airbender is more your thing and Zuko is your precious cinnamon bun, then check out **_Embers **_**by Vathara.**

In the meantime, enjoy the show.

Not much else to say. Please direct all questions to my inbox. Review and tell your internet friends.

And here we go.

I own nothing.

OF BOWS AND DRAGONS

Chapter 15: A Parting of Ways Part I

The moment the sails of Astrid's ship broke through the mist the call went out to every villager: salvation. They streamed to the dock. About four hundred Vikings of varying in age gathered onto the crowded docks. The feeling of hope permeated the village as they waited for the news. If the gods were kind Hiccup would be with the dragon trainers with a plan to make them safe. If notâ€¦ well, that would be huddle to come to later.

The ship docked slowly and the assembly strained to see the people on deck. There were at least five human shapes on deck in addition to the four dragon shapes. This sent ripples of murmurs through the assembled Vikings. It was evident that Toothless and Hiccup had been brought back by the search party. At the sight, hope surged brighter.

The ship finished tying itself off and they began to disembark from the craft. The search team descended the ramp first while their dragons left to the mass roost to inform the others of what has been developing for the village and their chief. The team looked to be in more or less the same condition in which they had left but, it was evident Hiccup was not.

He did not descend the ramp alone. A young woman with great bushy flame colored hair in worn dress was almost supporting him as they made their way down the ramp. Neither looked to be in good condition. Hiccup appeared to have discarded his armor in favor of an old spare tunic that was unbelted around the middle and his leg was bandaged tightly. Toothless came strolling behind them looking a little worse for the wear but none the less alive.

The village parted to allow Gothi the Elder to hobble to the front of the crowd and greet Hiccup and the red headed woman. The diminutive

old woman batted those not paying attention to her approach aside with her bone hewn staff as she came to rest by Astrid's side. Gothi raised a brow and huffed as she scratched some runes into the ash covered ground at Hiccup's feet that read simply 'well?'

After deciphering the Elder's atrocious writing, Hiccup merely gave a smile and drew the piece of bound parchment from Toothless' saddlebag. "This is Merida. Her father, King Fergus of DunBroch, has offered us asylum, with free rule!"

The response of Berk was immediate. The Vikings offered the loud words of disappointment, shock, and anger. Merida took an involuntary step backwards at the uproar. She had expected shock and happiness at the news, not this unbridled anger directed at her and her friend. In the crowd, weapons were raised as they grew more restless.

"Shut up," shouted a feminine voice over the roar. The crowd silenced and parted once again. "We sent Hiccup with our faith that he would find a suitable place for to prosper." The split in the crowd ended before the elder and the chief to reveal Valka. "I say we press our faith and hear the boy out."

Merida quickly took in the appearance of the woman before her. Given the villagers' reactions to them, they were obviously well-respected members of the tribe. The older, and smaller, of the two carried a sizable bone staff and held severe hump on her back. Her white-blond hair was bound into a braid on either side of her head with a small horned helmet adorning her head. She wore a warm fur vest that was belted around her middle. Padding on her arms seemed to cover scars on her arms if the few poking out were anything to go by.

The other woman also carried a staff but it appeared to be meant for fighting given the knobbed and curved point. She was thin and lithe which differed from the thicker Vikings surrounding her. Her clothing was layers of cloth covered by a long dark yellow tunic with a burnt orange belt and large circular shoulder pads connecting to a fur hood. Her bracers and boots both had spikes that appeared to be made from dragon spikes.

"Thanks, mom," remarked Hiccup with a grimace. A chief shouldn't need his mother to solve his disputes. Merida on the other hand was pleasantly surprised at his mother. The chief rubbed his face and passed the parchment to Gothi. "This is the treaty Fergus and I negotiated. It will not be official until you give it your approval."

The Elder of Berk took it and turned to the direction of the mead hall that was nestled into the cliff side and gestured to the chief and princess to follow her. Valka then shouted at the Vikings to return to their business and that they would be called when there was further news of the treaty, before she followed her son to the mead hall. Gobber, Fishlegs, Snotlout, Astrid, the twins and Eret, son of Eret, all went to follow suite. However, Gobber stopped the younger Vikings and said to them, "Go and keep order with the others and finish the final preparations for the journey." With great reluctance they moved to do as they were asked.

Merida walked behind Hiccup as they were led through the ruins of the Berk. Many of the buildings had been obviously scavenged for materials to assist the rebuilding of the fleet. Others were broken

and twisted shelled of their former selves, much like the Vikings that now appeared to haunt the island. Some buildings were untouched and looked lived in but it was evident that a large portion of the survivors and the dragons were residing on the ships in the harbor.

The group approached the massive wooden doors that were inset to the great cliff before them. Intricate carvings outlined them and left Merida in awe of the construction. Inside was pleasantly warm as a large fire warmed the hearth. Very little remained in the great hall as all that really remained was a great carved table with sword stuck into a map inset to the table's center as well as a scattering of other tables.

The five of them sat down at one of these few remaining tables. Hiccup and Merida sat to one side and Gothi sat in the middle of the other side with Gobber and Valka flanking her.

"Merida. This is my mom, Valka. That's Gobber, my blacksmith master and this is Gothi the village Elder." Hiccup pointed to each Viking in turn. "Mom, Gobber, Gothi. This is Princess Merida of DunBroch."

Merida bowed her head in recognition and gave an uncomfortable smile that was returned by Valka and Gobber. They personally liked the face value of the offer for such land. Hell, their distant kin had invaded those same lands years ago. That was also the same reason they were wary. The memories of war do not fade easy.

With pleasentries exchanged, Gothi got to work scrutinizing the treaty that had been given to her for her approval. It appeared to her that Stoick's son had negotiated quite the treaty with this 'Fergus' fellow. He had secured a sizable chunk of land for the promise of kinship and trade. The final tenet that was added just above Hiccup's mark was enough to make her gasp. The diminutive woman glared at Hiccup, passed the parchment to Valka, and then immediately thumped Hiccup in the head with her staff.

"OW! What was that for?" complained Hiccup as he rubbed the rapidly forming lump.

It had been several decades since the Elder had the ability to speak. So being unable to speak, she understandably wacked Hiccup again.

"OW!" he exclaimed. "Would you stop that!"

Merida giggled nervously at this odd display. Court back in DunBroch was an orderly affair. This on the other hand was chaos. It was different and she wasn't sure if it was a good thing yet.

Valka rubbed her brow in frustration at her son. "I know that I was not around to raise you but that I know for a fact that your father would never thought this was acceptable."

Her son recoiled at the tone as a shadow of recognition passed across his face. Hiccup took his hand away from the knot on his head and composed himself. "You mean the final clause that I agreed to. That point is moot." His words came cold and smooth. "If you had bothered to finish that part, you'd have seen that Merida has to accept our

involvement for it to apply. She doesn't so, it doesn't."

Gobber took the treaty from Valka's hands and read over the contested portion. "The lad is right. If Merida's consent is needed for the clause to apply."

Shadows of shame flitted across Valka's stern expression before it softened to the two before her. "That changes things then. Sorry for snapping like that Hiccup. Overall, this is a sound treaty your father would have been proud of."

Hiccups stony face softened as well when he gave his mother a small sad smile.

While they had their heart to heart moment, Merida watched as Gothi took a piece of charcoal from her pocket and grabbed the treaty from Gobber's hands. She began to make new mark directly beneath Hiccup's mark. The princess saw that the Elder drew the same crest that adorned Hiccup's pauldron and then circled the stylized head with a number of the runes. Once the mark was made, she slid the parchment over to wear it sat between Merida and Hiccup.

Unsurprisingly, Merida was unable to discern the meaning behind them. She glanced over to her friend, who was obviously reading them already, and asked, "What does it say?"

Hiccup flashed her smile. "By honor, we swear to uphold."

"So we're agreed then!"

Hiccup smiled again and made get up from the table. He was only halfway off of the bench when the glares from Valka and Gothi brought his rear back down. "What did I do now?"

His mother hefted her staff and pointed at the area beneath the unbelted tunic he wore and the bandages on his leg. "Leg bandaged. Head wound fading. Favoring your left side. What happened to you?" demanded Valka.

Hiccup shrugged nonchalantly. "It was a rougher landing than usual that's all. My side is fine. No injury there."

Valka gave her son a deadpan expression before poking him roughly on his left side. At his recoil and shout of pain, she grimaced. "Oh yes, perfectly fine. I can tell."

"Well, he lies as well as his father apparently," interjected Gobber. "What the hell happened to you lad?"

Hiccup ran a nervous hand through his hair. "Are you sure I need to tell that story now? I mean we need to be prepared to leave as soon as possible."

"We've been preparing the whole time you've been gone, lad. And I set Astrid and the others to get any and all final preparations ready to finish. Regardless of how this meeting went, we can't stay here. Now what happened in DunBroch."

The young chief gave his mentor a withering look. He had made some less than sensible choices on this trip and he didn't need his mother

to scold him over them. "So Toothless and I landed in a wooded area really far south a couple of weeks into the journeyâ€¦" Hiccup tried to tell the story quickly and left out most of the detail of their time in DunBroch. Every so often Merida would comment and add to the story but mostly she listened to the story.

The three opposite of them listened intently to Hiccup's tale. They smirked at the incident involving the bear. That was the little hero they knew and loved. His trial brought some sounds of discontent from them. At the events that occurred on the island in the hostile Viking territory, the older Vikings looked at Merida with surprise and thanks. In the end, all three were much more understanding of his state.

Valka cleared her throat. "Well that was quite the tale. So, Hiccup, how do you want to tell the village the news?"

Hiccup smiled softly at the ancient meeting table that stood at the center of the room. The beaten and gouged surface gave off a warm glow from the fireplace. It reminded him a better days. Days where he didn't carry the burden of being chief. Day long since passed. "Call a meeting. We're leaving at dawn."

__-__Meanwhile in Dunbroch-__-

Fergus sat on his wooden throne in mental anguish while his court was in uproar. The court had taken the news of the alliance rather well. Hiccup had proven to be an honorable lad and if he represented his people then they would make great additions to the Kingdom. The court of course was far less accepting of the decision to send the princess with the brand new ally. This was the crack that Nathair had been using to silently sow discord among the court. Unfortunately, Fergus just didn't know it was him.

Currently, his mind wasn't on the rabble before him. It was on the agreement he had signed with Hiccup. He had ulterior motives to allowing an alliance so easily. He needed an ally for not necessarily the kingdom but, the clan itself. War was eminent. Fergus could taste it in the winds. It hung in the air while he slept and it watched him from the shadows as he walked the halls of Castle DunBroch. War was only a stone's throw away. The only question was whether it would be between the clans, the North which grew restless with each passing month, or from an enemy which still lurks in the mist. But the fear that made him lie awake at night and check the shadows for enemies wasn't the coming of war. It was whether his people would stand alone.

****AN: Again: sorry. Next Chapter will be up in a week or so. Originally this and the next chapter were going to be one large chapter. But as I was writing this point felt like a solid break. This way you guys also get more updates.****

****Not much action here but this needed to happen. ****

****Next time on **_**Of Bows and Dragons**_** Chapter 16: A Parting of Ways Part II.****

****Review and let me know what you think of the story so far.****

****War and Peace,****

****RedHoodandtheOutlaws****

16. Chapter 16

****AN: I present Chapter 16. The next chapter will come in a couple of weeks since I'm starting from scratch on it. ****

****In the meantime, enjoy the show.****

****Not much else to say. Please direct all questions to my inbox. Review and tell your internet friends.****

****And here we go.****

****I own nothing.****

****OF BOWS AND DRAGONS****

****Chapter 16: A Parting of Ways Part II****

Hiccup smiled softly at the ancient meeting table that stood at the center of the room. The beaten and gouged surface gave off a warm glow from the fireplace. It reminded him a better days. Days where he didn't carry the burden of being chief. Day long since passed. "Call a meeting. We're leaving at dawn."

It took just over an hour to gather the village of anxious Vikings into the mead hall. They murmured loudly as they waited for the announcement that would change their lives forever. Hiccup's generation of dragon riders gather around the head of the table as they waited for their chief to arrive. Besides Hiccup, the only humans missing from the meeting were Astrid and Merida. The former had taken the latter get her more suitable clothes for the meeting before the whole village.

Hiccup had left to dress back into his armor. After that he went to visit the memorial of Stoick the Vast for strength and guidance. The familiar cold of his home penetrated his armor as though it were a loving embrace. He would miss that miserable biting sensation. He briefly thought of how his father would handle the situation but, the pangs of loss and guilt forced him to change his line of thought. Toothless could usually pull him out of these moods easier but, he was still off with the herd preparing them the best he could. Hiccup gave his head a shake before reading the words etched into the stone. _'Have Honor. Fear Nothing.'_

Taking one last breath Hiccup marched to where Merida and Astrid were both waiting outside of the mead hall. "Well you two. Are you ready for the axes to get thrown our way?" asked Hiccup with a crooked smile.

Astrid grinned and set a hand on one of her axes. "At least we'll have return fire."

Merida grimaced. _'These people are insane,'_ she thought as she nervously adjusted the clothes she borrowed from Astrid. They were a little small and wearing trousers was just bizarre in here mind. She took in the sight of Hiccup in his armor once again. The armor hid so

much of him from head to toe. His had become quick appreciated while he was in DunBroch and when he disarmed at night along their journey to Berk. She had come to enjoy the sight and she was sad to see it hidden. Hiccup forced both doors open and led the way into the vast hall.

Within moments of opening the doors, the whole hall fell silent. A path cleared before Hiccup as he marched past the sea of solemn faces. The Chief of the Vikings at Berk stood at the head of the ancient and worn table as he had so many weeks before to tell a very different tale. His eyes scanned the crowd before him and frowned. It seemed that every time he took this place at the table there were fewer of his kin than before. Tribal war, invasions, famine, and cold had cost his people so much. Now was his time to try and save them.

"Gothi approved the treaty with DunBroch." The mass before him began to murmur loudly until all that could be heard was a dull roar. It took several minutes for the sound to quiet down enough for him to continue. "I know most of you don't want to leave and are against seeking asylum from DunBroch but, hear me out. Fergus, their king, is offering us free reign in return for trade and kinship."

"We'd be betraying our own kin if we go!" shouted an angry voice from somewhere in the crowd. Murmurs of agreement veined through the crowd.

"Our kin declared war on us firs!" cried another voice. The arguments spread like wild fire amongst dry bush. The minority tried to reason that the other tribes were still kin and thus were honor bound to help. The majority countered that when those tribes went to war with Berk they abandoned that kinship. Soon, arguing became shouting. Shouting became shoving. It wasn't long before they began to head down a bloodier path and reach for axes and swords.

Seeing the escalation reaching a tipping point, Hiccup acted. He reached behind him on his right side and ripped one of Astrid's axes from her belt. With the resounding sound of splitting wood he drove the steel blade into the meeting table. "ENOUGH!" All of the arguing and movement in the hall came to a sudden standstill. "I pled our case to every tribe between here and DunBroch. Every damn one of them turned their backs on us. They hate and fear us for making peace with the dragon. They wanted to wipe us out and we defended ourselves. Despite that I went to every one of them for help. They would rather us die.

"DunBroch offered a deal that would save this tribe so, I took it. Our ancestors, my father, didn't fight and die for this frozen clump of rocks. They fought to keep the tribe alive. The tribe is never the place we hang our weapons. WE are the tribe. If we stay here, we'll spit on everything they have fought and died for." The whole tribe lowered their heads at the thought of not honoring those sacrifices made before them.

"I will not bow before some lout who was handed a crown because he was born to the right family," said Spitelout in a calm voice. He stood at the opposite side of the table with his arms crossed across his chest. "No Viking with any honor would kneel before such a man."

Merida took this moment to step forward to Hiccup's left side. "My father wasn't born the Bear King of DunBroch. He was the proud leader of his clan before the other Vikings invaded. The clans agreed to make him their king in the aftermath of the war. He knows he risks open rebellion by simply making this offer to you. My father is risking everything because he feels that this tribe could help to keep his people out of harm's way. To my people, your prowess in battle is legendary and to have you stand with would beâ€¦ We would be honored."

Spitelout and many of the other Vikings gave Merida an appraising look. "Well than lass, that changes things. Alright. I'm in," said Spitelout. He uncrossed his arms and pointed at the princess. "But I still won't bow to him."

"Deal."

Hiccup gave Merida a thankful smile before turning back to the group. "Spitelout's coming. What do the rest of you say?"

The rest of the tribe muttered amongst themselves. While the chief's word was law, every Viking was free to make up their own mind. Spitelout had been on Stoick's council not too long ago. Hiccup may be the reigning chief but he was untested in his new position. He had yet to even gather his council. "When do we leave?" came the question from the middle of the crowd.

Hiccup smiled. "We need to be on the move as soon as we can. We leave at dawn."

__--The Next Morning--__

The Haddock house had been in the family for generations. It had been lit ablaze countless times but, had stayed more or less intact. Currently it was one of the few buildings that hadn't been razed or scavenged in recent days. Part of the reason was for the memory of Stoick. Also, it had been used as a hospital and by the time that they were out of patients the fleet was finished.

Merida woke up early that morning in that same house. She bolted upright as she took in the unfamiliar surroundings. I wasn't long before she remembered last night. This was Hiccup's old room. The straw filled mattress was lumpy and it felt like a couple of rocks had worked their way into the stuffing. No wonder Hiccup was so comfortable sleeping on the ground. Then, in a flash, the previous days and night's events came back to her. The meeting with Gothi. The meeting with the rest of the tribe. The meager dinner. Walking to the Haddock House with Hiccup and Toothless. The closeness withâ€¦ She was thankful that she was alone so the blush went unnoticed.

Merida hurriedly packed her bag with what little of her belongings that had survived the trip. She needed to talk to Hiccup while the two of them could be alone. After finishing getting dressed into the borrowed trousers, Merida grabbed her bag and quickly headed down the worn wooden steps. The sight at the bottom of the stairs was both disappointing yet oddly relieving. In the spot that Hiccup's bedroll and Toothless had occupied when she had made her exit the night before was Valka and Cloudjumper. The hearth next to them was alive with a warm fire.

The wide horned beast looked up at the stairs quickly and made both Merida and Valka jump at the sudden movement and eye contact. "Ah! Merida, you startled me," she said. Valka grabbed a simple bowl and ladled some of the thin soup that was warming in a pot over the hearth. "I was about to come and wake you. Come and eat up. We're leaving soon."

Merida set the bag down and took the bowl from Valka's hands. The younger woman scanned the room looking for any sign of Hiccup or Toothless. "So, where did Toothless and Hiccup wander off to?" She tried hard not to sound too eager. The small smirk on Valka's face hinted that she had been less than successful.

"The two of them got up early. They've already left Berk."

Merida's eyes went wide. "What? Why the hellâ€¦"

Valka gave a small laugh that cut off Merida's intelligent line of questions. "They left to go track down the trade tribe. He said he needed to tell them where we were heading."

"Why'd they go?"

"Hiccup and Toothless are the fastest pair anyone has ever seen. They can reach the tradesmen quickly. They also stand a better chance catching back up to us."

Merida nodded slowly. _'I guess Hiccup didn't want to talk about last night, either.' _She sat quietly and ate the watery soup while Valka dosed the fire and began to pack the cooking equipment that surrounded the hearth.

Valka took the empty from Merida and looked down into the bowl. "I'm sorry about the food we've given you during your visit here. It isn't usually thisâ€¦ unpleasant. We've had to ration our food supply andâ€¦"

"I understand. You have to make sure you have food for when you get where you're going." Merida stood and picked up her bag. "Well, time to be off then?"

Valka smiled and gave the princess a grateful nod. She hefted the clanking bag and exited the house with Cloudjumper and Merida right behind her. The trio walked through the ruins of Berk. The ash and rubble took on an eerie glow in the early dawn light. At the docks, people and dragons bustled about making sure that everything was in place. If they set this up perfectly, then they wouldn't have to stop very often and they would remain of sight from other tribes.

Valka led Merida onto the lead ship. The older woman mounted Cloudjumper and together they rose a few feet into the air to address the tribe. "Everyone, we are setting sail! Keep the ships together. If we get separated, remember: south by southwest out of the Viking territories. From there DunBroch lies directly south." Having given the orders, the pair descended to the deck of the ship. The ships began departing in near unison and began the journey to their new home.

Merida watched as the Berk began to move away from the ship. She felt glad to be on her way back to familiar lands once again. It was

evident, however, that Valka didn't feel the same. A single tear rolled down her face. "Valka?"

Valka didn't wipe the tear away. She didn't even look in Merida's direction. She simply stared at her retreating homeland. "This is the second time I've had to watch as I left that island with no expectation of ever returning. Last time I was taken from my husband and infant son. Now Stoick is dead, my son has grown, and I leave of my own free will. My people are saved from the cold and starvation. But luck has never been ours."

Merida nodded slowly and without full understanding. She looked back at the island with a sense of nervousness and excitement growing in her body. Merida hadn't felt this since the first time she saw a Wil-O-Wisp all those years ago when Mor'du had attacked. The coming months were going to be interesting indeed.

****AN: Ta-da! I hope you guys enjoyed the new chapter.****

****Next Chapter will be up in a few weeks or so.****

****Next time on **_**Of Bows and Dragons,**_** Chapter 17: A Time for Change****

****Review and let me know what you think of the story so far.****

****War and Peace,****

****_RedHoodandtheOutlaws****

End
file.